

What is Within the Moment of Hesitation?

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CANDIDATE DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This research project explores the question 'What is within the moment of hesitation?'

The research question is an example of an emergent phenomenon. The phrase 'popped into my head' one day and, despite my best efforts, I was unable to identify where it came from. Its persistence prompted this experimental art-based research.

Exploration of the question has suggested that a moment is not necessarily an instant, hesitation is not stasis. Instead, the question seems to point to a 'points of ellipsis' where the extent and structure of that which is 'missing' is unknown at the moment of encounter. It opens up the potential for infinite possibilities and complexity.

Ephemeral and often formless, the works are prompted by the emergent phenomena of everyday life. Sometimes they are simply the recorded remainder of a moment, sometimes a performance, sometimes an invitation to others to do something (such as the participatory projects and Fluxus-inspired event scores).

The role of these disparate and, in terms of the project's presentation, dispersed works is not to be a static form of art but to be *indicators of potential*, signifiers of possibilities. The video works in particular build on John Cage's expansion, in his work *4'33"*, of the understanding of music to include sounds that are in the everyday environment. The works for this project adapt this philosophy to the visual arts. They also build on the work of conceptual artists by relocating the 'art moment' to the everyday lived experience of mind and body. They propose that the resonance of a lived moment is the same as the resonance of engagement with other forms of art. They suggest that such phenomena are available to anyone, and they invite others to 'tune in' to their own everyday life, their own phenomena, their own experience, their own being in the moment. They say, 'This is what is here for you. This too is art.'

Importantly, this experimental art practice is strongly influenced by and draws on Fluxus values, methods and characteristics. Ken Friedman has identified twelve characteristics of Fluxus practice, all of which are evident in the project, especially playfulness. The playful seriousness of Fluxus (or the serious playfulness of Zen) is a perennial theme throughout the research, in both written and practical components, even though these may be posited outside the norms of academic convention and presentation of works. There may be a play of

ideas, play of experimentation, play of words, a play of metaphors. The works are often paradoxical. While on the one hand they appear irregular, intimate, unpretentious and simple (wabi-sabi), they may also benignly allude to an inherent or inherited complexity.

To realise and share the works, a deliberate choice has been made to use the ubiquitous technologies of today such as iPhone video/photography and YouTube. Minimal intervention is preferred for the video works, footage may sometimes be slowed, but in general it is unedited apart from the basics of such things as title and attribution. In acknowledgement of the autonomy of the works (drawing on Merleau-Ponty's 'hollow of being'), they are ascribed the anonymous 'authorship' of PringaDa (a name that was also an emergent phenomenon).

The enquiry covers diverse ground, touching base with Complexity Theory, dallying with the dying thoughts of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (his unfinished working notes), breathing with Zen Buddhism, listening with John Cage, playing mind games with Yoko Ono and George Brecht. These are the primary touchstones for the research, but the project also references a broad array of other theoretical concerns and artists whose work interfaces with the major themes, including kanarinka and the Boston-based art group iKatun, The Art Guys, Francis Alÿs, Alison Knowles, Ben Vautier and Matthew Lee Knowles. Additional theoretical references selected to differentiate or clarify the research include Georges Bataille's *l'informe* (formlessness — Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss), the dematerialisation of the art object (Lucy Lippard), the *dérive* and *détournement* of the Situationists, relational aesthetics (Nicolas Bourriaud), participation and the 'do-it-yourself' artwork (Anna Dezeuze) and Hans Ulrich Obrist's *do it* project.

This project has explored notions that in Western culture are not easily understood: complexity, synchronicity and serendipity. Importantly, the research suggests new understandings about art, proffering an art that is beyond the art object, beyond the gallery, beyond the artist, beyond specific focus, beyond delineation and, ultimately, beyond intent.

There are infinite possibilities that exist within the moment of hesitation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank You Piece

Thank you

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politeness is NO crime

Peter Frank

DATE UNKNOWN

From (and formatted as per)
Fluxus Performance Workbook
2002, eds Ken Friedman, Owen
Smith & Lauren Sawchyn,
Performance Research e-
Publications, viewed 3 March
2014,
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Where does someone begin to say thank you, to acknowledge others whose contribution has helped shape a project such as this? Peter Frank's 15 statements of thanks (left) are nowhere near enough when you consider that everything comes from somewhere...however, I will make a start.

Firstly, a huge thank you to my supervisors, Penny Mason, Professor Marie Sierra and Dr Sue Henderson. To be able to talk openly about the themes, concerns and modus operandi of this project has been wonderful. Your guidance, understanding and encouragement has been invaluable.

Thank you also to others at the University of Tasmania, to staff and fellow students who listened and gave feedback during presentations and critique sessions, to Dr Malcom Bywaters for helping to navigate the requirements of the Graduate Research Office, to Dr Troy Ruffels for help with alternative spaces and equipment for the works' presentation, and to Christopher Jackson for coordinating my need to play with the piano one more time. Thank you to the piano too (or, I should say, to whoever put the piano under the art school stairs in 2012, which prompted a lot of thinking about John Cage and silence).

Also thank you to the team at Sawtooth ARI for their support in sharing some of the work and the stimulating discussions as part of sessions initiated and led by Sawtooth's Thinker-in-Residence, Dr Deb Malor, in 2013. Without you it is unlikely I would have discovered the work of Karen Barad and others.

I had become interested in Fluxus some time before the commencement of this research project. Like emergent phenomena, I had come across iKatun and others via the internet and a casual visit to the Centre of Attention in London in 2004 exposed me to the remainder of Ken Friedman's performance of his *12 Structures*. During these years I started to participate in Fluxus projects and connect with the international Fluxus community. I would like to thank all who have been a part of this time, in particular Matt Taggart for introductions to the online Fluxus community who continue to be my 'virtual friends' today and whose activities always inspire me.

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Last but by no means least, a huge thank you to my son—our conversations and your presence in the world are always a delight and inspiration. This project is dedicated to you, Calum.

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Part Six

Figure 83: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Dog and Orange*, 2007, Findhorn Beach, Scotland

This art-based experimental research project explores the question:

‘What is within the moment of hesitation?’

In this project, the playful seriousness of Fluxus (or the serious playfulness of Zen) is a perennial theme in both written and practical components, even though these may be posited outside the norms of academic convention and presentation of works. There may be a play of ideas, play of experimentation, play of words, a play of metaphors.

This changeability is reflected in the writing style of this exegesis as various topics invoke various forms of expression. Influenced by John Cage, the fluxing of ideas is represented by the playfully ironical use of the word ‘nothing’ that runs as a thread through all parts of the exegesis:

Part 1 is this brief introduction which includes an overview of the research question. It also offers a short explanation of why the pseudonym PringaDa is used for the ‘authorship’ of the project’s works.

Part 2 considers states of flux, focusing on the theoretical and philosophical touchstones of the project: universal flux (complexity theory), philosophical/ontological flux (Merleau-Ponty) and the way-of-life flux of Zen Buddhism.

Part 3 explores attitudinal fluxes that interconnect with the project, touching base with the Situationists and *L’informe* (formlessness) but primarily focusing on Fluxus. This part concludes with selected examples of contemporary artworks to illustrate both the Fluxus attitude that informs the approach to practice in this project and the legacy of Fluxus in contemporary art.

Part 4 outlines the approach to practice taken in this project. This includes a Zen-like approach, responses to emergent phenomena and, in the articulation of ideas and sharing of works, the Fluxus attitude.

Part 5 discusses how the touchstones covered in Part 2 and Part 3 interconnect with the practical component of the project. It provides specific comparative examples that clarify or differentiate this research.

Part 6 reminds us that the project process is complex, and complexity leads to new possibilities. A conclusion therefore seems antithetical, so this part offers a consideration of additional questions in relation to the research and suggests an attitudinal shift through language could provide the beginnings of a different way of being, making, understanding and engaging with art.

the research question

‘What is within the moment of hesitation?’ has its roots extending into what appears to be an aggregate of interconnected ideas across time and across disciplines. This research question is an example of an emergent phenomenon. The phrase ‘popped into my head’ one day and, despite my best efforts, I was unable to identify its source. Its persistence prompted this research.

The apparent cross-pollination that has occurred is fascinating and elusive, frequently complex and often difficult to comprehend.

To me, this is a question that is both physical and philosophical, suggesting a kind of ‘points of ellipsis’ where the extent and structure of that which is ‘missing’ is unknown at the moment of encounter. A ‘points of ellipsis’ is ‘a figure of syntax by which a word or words are left out and implied’ (*Chambers Concise Dictionary*, p. 309).

In Western culture complexity, synchronicity, and serendipity are not easily understood. Yet I believe that everything is connected and can lead anywhere. Within this fluctuating phenomenon exist moments of potential or expansion.

To seek sources that might substantiate this claim, I looked first of all at the definitions inherent in the question.

Moment

In everyday usage, the word 'moment' generally means a brief and insignificant period of time. However, the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* also lists other definitions:

A period of time (not necessarily brief) marked by a particular quality of experience or by a memorable event.

A particular stage or period in a course of events or in the development of something; a turning point...

Of even more interest for the context of this research is a further definition from the *OED*:

An essential element or significant aspect of a complex conceptual entity.

In this project, therefore, a moment can be longer than an instant, and it can be a moment of significance.

Hesitation

Hesitation is generally associated with a period of indecision. Once again, from the *OED*:

The action of hesitating; a pausing or delaying in deciding or acting, due to irresolution; the condition of doubt in relation to action.

But can there ever be a point in which everything is suspended? After all, quantum physics and philosophy have both demonstrated that there is no stasis, that everything is in a state of flux. Even the above definition alludes to some non-singular content on the basis of which the decision needs to be made.

Therefore, in the context of this research, the term 'hesitation' is not interpreted in the same manner as that implied by the anxiety-filled 'stasis' or 'suspended animation' of Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void* (1960) or Bas Jan Alder's *Fall II* (1970):



Figure 1: Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void/Le Saut Dans Le Vide*, 1960, photomontage



Figure 2: Bas Jan Ader, *Fall II*, 1970, Amsterdam, 16mm film, 19 seconds, colour reproduction still

Hesitation is also synonymous with tergiversation, which originally meant ‘refusal to obey’, and is now more commonly a term that means:

...‘turning one’s back on’, i.e. forsaking something in which one was previously engaged, interested, or concerned.

(OED)

Tergiversation is strongly related to the Fluxus attitude.

This research therefore uses the term ‘hesitation’ in the context of ambiguity, uncertainty, flux, paradox, ambivalence, the resultant tergiversation and a dynamic and open-ended field of possibilities.

What I think and what I feel can be my inspiration but it is then also my pair of blinders. To see one must go beyond the imagination and for that one must stand absolutely still as though in center of a leap.

(John Cage 1961, p.170)

Reappropriation and ‘originary language’

My suggestion that the term ‘hesitation’ should be reappropriated or expanded to encompass the above concepts may be seen as a form of ‘originary language’. According to Eleanor Godway (1992), originary language:

...institutes new meanings. [...] It is not restricted to the sedimented meanings of an ossified tradition. It seeks to open the constraints of *le langage*. Such expression creates new meanings out of the past, thereby opening the future to novelty while simultaneously changing the meaning that the past has for us.

(Godway 1992, p. 165)

Examining and defining the meaning of the research question in the above manner leads to a more open field of possibilities through which notions of complexity, synchronicity and serendipity may be explored.

‘pringada’: an explanation

It should be noted that throughout this project, works are ascribed the anonymous ‘authorship’ of PringaDa. This is in acknowledgement of the autonomy of the works (drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s ‘hollow of being’, described in Parts 2 and 4). It is a name that, like the research question, was an emergent phenomenon. Its playfully serious usage reflects the Fluxus attitude.

Ephemeral and often formless, the works in this project are prompted by the emergent phenomena of everyday life. To realise and share the works, a deliberate choice has been made to use the ubiquitous technologies of today such as iPhone video/photography and YouTube. Sometimes the works are simply the recorded remainder of a moment, sometimes a performance, sometimes an invitation to others to do something (such as the participatory projects and Fluxus-inspired event scores).

[...] (NOTHING) IS SIMPLE

flux and fluxing

This part of the exegesis considers the theoretical and philosophical touchstones of the project: universal flux (complexity theory), philosophical/ontological flux (Merleau-Ponty) and the way-of-life flux of Zen Buddhism.

Selected attitudinal fluxes that have influenced artistic expression during the past hundred years will be considered in Part 3, including examples.

How these touchstones intertwine with the research will be discussed in Part 5 where specific comparative examples that clarify or differentiate this project will be provided.

states of flux: complexity, interconnectedness and zen

As outlined in the introduction to this exegesis, ‘What is within the moment of hesitation?’ is a question that is both philosophical and physical. Its essence alludes to the ineffable, the liminal, and concerns the interconnectedness of things, moments of altered awareness and the potential for emergence/expansion.

In seeking touchstones by which to clarify the values on which this research is based, the following theories/philosophies have emerged:

- Complexity Theory
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *The Visible and the Invisible*
- Zen Buddhism

Complexity theory and its precursors have been influential in science, technology and mathematics for some time. This influence is newer and less developed in social science. In the perspectives of critical phenomenology, post-modern critical theory, post-structuralism and contemporary aesthetics, it is at times completely absent, much to their cost.

(Smith & Jenks 2006, p. 3)

Complexity is considered by many to be the single most important scientific development since general relativity (Johnson 2007). Complexity Theory, more a range of concepts than a single theory per se, first took shape in the 1980s, having grown out of several early 20th century scientific theories such as systems theory (1950s) and chaos theory (1960s/70s). Complexity scientists endeavour to explain complex phenomena and while doing so they seem to pay particular attention to dynamical properties such as emergence, self organisation and adaptation.

Complexity researchers, such as those involved with the Santa Fe Institute in the USA, have applied the concepts of complexity science to a diverse range of subjects, from biological systems to technological systems, traffic jams to health, from human conflicts to environmental change. It appears that we cannot escape complexity, and Neil Johnson (head of an inter-disciplinary research group in Complexity at the University of Miami and formerly Professor of Physics and co-director of research collaboration into Complexity at Oxford University) concurs, stating that complexity is ‘deeply engrained in our own everyday lives’ (Johnson 2007, p. 3).

So what *is* complexity? There is no easy answer to this question. Complexity is hard to define, for the simple reason that it can mean different things to different people.

For example, Melanie Mitchell (Professor of Computer Science at Portland State University and External Professor at the Santa Fe Institute) describes how in 2004 the Santa Fe Institute ran a panel discussion at which the first question was ‘How do you define *complexity*?’ — the panel were unable to agree on an answer. Mitchell states the reason for this is that ‘there is not yet a single science of complexity but rather several different sciences of complexity with different notions of what complexity means’ (Mitchell, M 2009, pp. 94–95).

Johnson agrees that there is no rigorous definition of complexity. He says that, like happiness, it may be 'hard to define, but we can note its characteristics' (2007, p. 13). He says that a complex system should have most or all of the following characteristics:

- The system contains a collection of many interacting objects or 'agents'
- These objects' behaviour is affected by memory or 'feedback'
- The objects can adapt their strategies according to their history
- The system is typically 'open'
- The system exhibits emergent phenomena which are generally surprising, and may be extreme
- The emergent phenomena typically arise in the absence of any sort of 'invisible hand' or central controller
- The system shows a complicated mix of ordered and disordered behaviour

(Johnson 2007, pp.13–15)

Johnson continues:

...a complex system exhibits pockets of order. In particular, it continually slips between order and disorder and hence so does the predictability of its future movements. (2007, p. 91)

Because of the wide range of possible internal interactions and behaviours that it can exhibit, a complex system may produce a wide range of network shapes or "structures".

(Johnson 2007, p. 99)

Meinard Kuhlmann (2010) identifies two types of complexity, both of which are applicable to this research project.

The first type is 'compositional' (see Figure 3) where the system has very many components, and complex behaviours result from their interactions. Examples of a compositional complex system are the contemporary networks inhabited by those who identify with Fluxus (discussed in Part 3) and, in the context of this research, *The This Project* (discussed in Part 5).

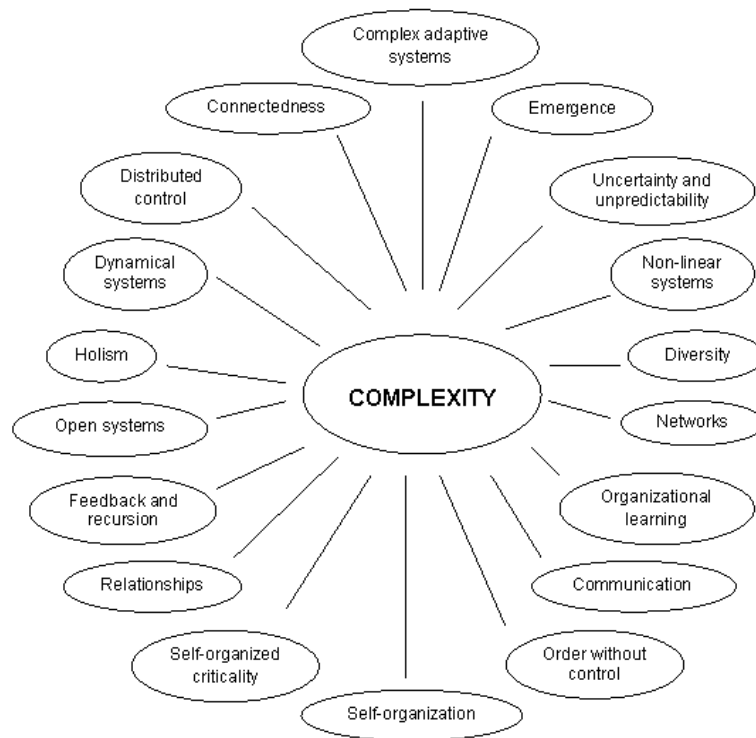


Figure 3: Components of Complexity Theory (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2006)

The second type of complexity identified by Kuhlmann (2010) is a ‘simple’ system, the dynamics of which are complex. It has only a few simple components and exhibits complex behaviour in time. Examples of this are the simple Fluxus scores of George Brecht and Yoko Ono (discussed in Part 3) and, in the context of this research, *FluxMusic* (2011) (discussed in Part 5).

Over the past decades, complexity theorists have used the term emergence to describe a vast range of emergent phenomena that arise from complex systems, including gestalt effect, synergy and perceptions. While some commentators such as Peter Corning argue for a more limited definition of emergence (Corning 2002), it is a term that remains widely applied to a vast range of phenomena in complexity science today.

In their paper, ‘Complexity Theory: A science of cultural systems?’, Cham and Johnson (2007) suggest that ‘based upon the key principles of interaction and emergence in relation to adaptive and self organising systems in cultural artifacts and processes [...] complex systems are cultural systems. [...] Through interactive media complexity theory is the first post modern science; the first science of culture’.

Throughout this project, which may be viewed as an experimental approach to cultural production, both simple and compositional types of complexity are evident. Emergent phenomena act as a prompt for practical exploration; simple processes and expression are preferred; interaction with others who identify with Fluxus is representative of compositional complexity, as exemplified by F.A.C.E. (2011), *Close the Gallery (An Instruction from the Far Edge)* (2013) and *The This Project* (commenced 2011), all of which are discussed in Part 5.

[We] must, in light of the now-acknowledged complexity and contingency of biological and social systems, revise how we conceptualize the world, how we investigate the world, and how we act in the world.

(Mitchell 2009)

The processes and outcomes of this research suggest and represent a revision of the conceptualisation, investigation and actions associated with art as a form of cultural production.

merleau-ponty: the visible and the invisible

The final work of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) provides another touchstone for this research. Unfortunately Merleau-Ponty died suddenly before completing what I believe to be his most interesting and what others (e.g. Carbone 2004) state to be his most important work. This manuscript and working notes, since published in 1968 as *The Visible and the Invisible*, sought to ‘completely reorient philosophy and ontology’ (Reynolds n.d.).

Jonathan Gilmore (2005) recognises the relevance of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy to art, saying that ‘[e]ven if one finds no general theory of art in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, however, one can find a general theory of experience, a theory that artists may indeed make central to their art’ (p. 132).

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty addresses the problems of solipsism and other elements (many of which were the subject of criticism by feminist writers) that were evident in his earlier work. His self-acknowledged difficulty in these earlier works was due to his existential approach to describing the relationship between subject and object, self and world.

His final work takes us into a more dense and complex realm, and one of the ways he does this is by introducing the notion of '*la chair du monde*' ('flesh of the world'):

The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. ...[It is] a general thing, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea...

(Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 139)

Merleau-Ponty's 'reversibility thesis' explains the relationship that the 'flesh' allows through the intertwining between subject and object, seer and seen. This intertwining requires both an inseparable unity and an irreducible difference. While at first this may seem ambiguous and reminiscent of dualistic thinking, this is a more subtle difference, not an opposition. The self is not divorced from the world, instead it is part of the world and both world and self are continually opening up to each other. Merleau-Ponty explains how this relationship occurs:

...When I find again the actual world such as it is, under my hands, under my eyes, up against my body, I find much more than an object: [I find] a Being of which my vision is a part, a visibility older than my operations or acts. But this does not mean that there was a fusion or coinciding of me with it: on the contrary, this occurs because a sort of dehiscence opens my body in two, and because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we into the things.

(Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 123)

In this project, the videos *Dehiscence* (2012) and the *Modalities of Presence* (2012) series document an exploration of this notion (discussed in Part 5). Judith Butler attempts to elucidate these concepts:

The flesh is not my flesh or yours, but neither is it some third thing. It is the name for a relation of proximity and of breaking up. If the flesh dominates, it does not dominate like a subject dominates. The flesh is most certainly not a subject, and although our grammar puts it in a subject position, the flesh challenges the grammar by which it is made available to us in language. For whatever reason, the domination that the flesh enacts is achieved through the dehiscence or fission of its own mass. It dominates, in other words, by coming apart: the flesh is that which is always coming apart and then back upon itself, but that for which no coincidence with itself is possible.

(Butler 2005, p. 196)

Explaining that neither 'the invisible' or 'the visible' dominate one another, and that there is no hierarchy between thought (and language) and our everyday relationship with the world,

Lawrence Hass offers a model (see Figure 4) of Merleau-Ponty's theory of the visible and the invisible. To this he adds:

Creative new ideas, words, meaning, paradigms, theories, and thought-acquisitions surge up amid the world as ways of ideally organizing the world. But also, the artifacts of those acquisitions (writings, artworks, images, text, spoken words) literally, actually become part of the 'visible' and may go on to inspire further transcending articulations...[For] Merleau-Ponty...[a movement to becoming] unfolds...through contingent, creative, culturally and historically informed acts of transcending amid an overflowing world, acts which themselves leave sediments in and thus transform that world.

(Hass 2008, p. 196)

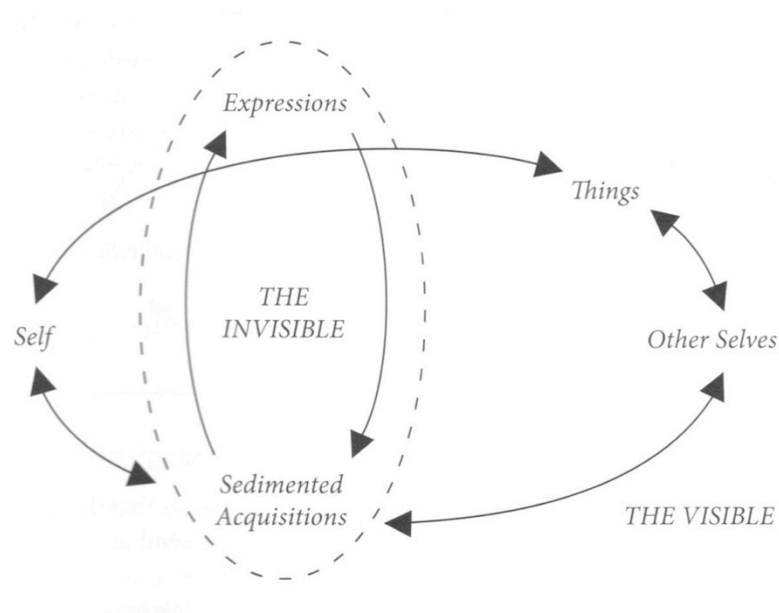


Figure 4: Model of Merleau-Ponty's Ontology of the Visible and Invisible (Hass 2008, p. 196)

What interests me and informs my practice most when it comes to Merleau-Ponty is his exploration of interconnectedness, consciousness and the complexity of both his writing and his theories. In the context of this project, the diagram above articulates the complex intertwining of my consciousness and unconsciousness, of people and events, of attitude and exploration and outcomes.

Complexity and ‘fields of possibility’ are recognised by Merleau-Ponty most notably in the context of all forms of perception and his reasoning as to why perception is not absolutely subjective. In terms of vision for example, when we focus on an object, the surrounds become indistinct and we are unable to gain maximum detail from the entire horizon of perception all at once. Such focusing is a notion that I have explored occasionally by masking the peripheral areas of video footage, replacing this field of possibilities with the ‘emptiness’ of black space in order to present another complex field of possibilities that is within the unmasked area (for example in *Drip Drawing III* (2013) and *Red Ball World* (2013), discussed in Part 5 of this exegesis).

Taylor Carman, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, says that this field of possibilities as described by Merleau-Ponty allows us to ‘anticipate in advance an indefinitely wide range of possible applications of the concept’ (Carman 2008, p. 106). This notion is particularly relevant to what I have called the ‘matterings’ videos in this project, where an emergent phenomenon seemed to present a particular importance and/or meaning to my consciousness, such as ‘seeing a world’ when stirring crabapple wine one day (*Red Ball World* (2013), discussed in Part 5).

Science has already demonstrated that everything is more complex than it may at first seem. The following statement, made by Mexican artist Sergio Toporek and appearing on the website of NASA’s Solar System Exploration Research Virtual Institute, illuminates some of the complexity of existence and visual perception.

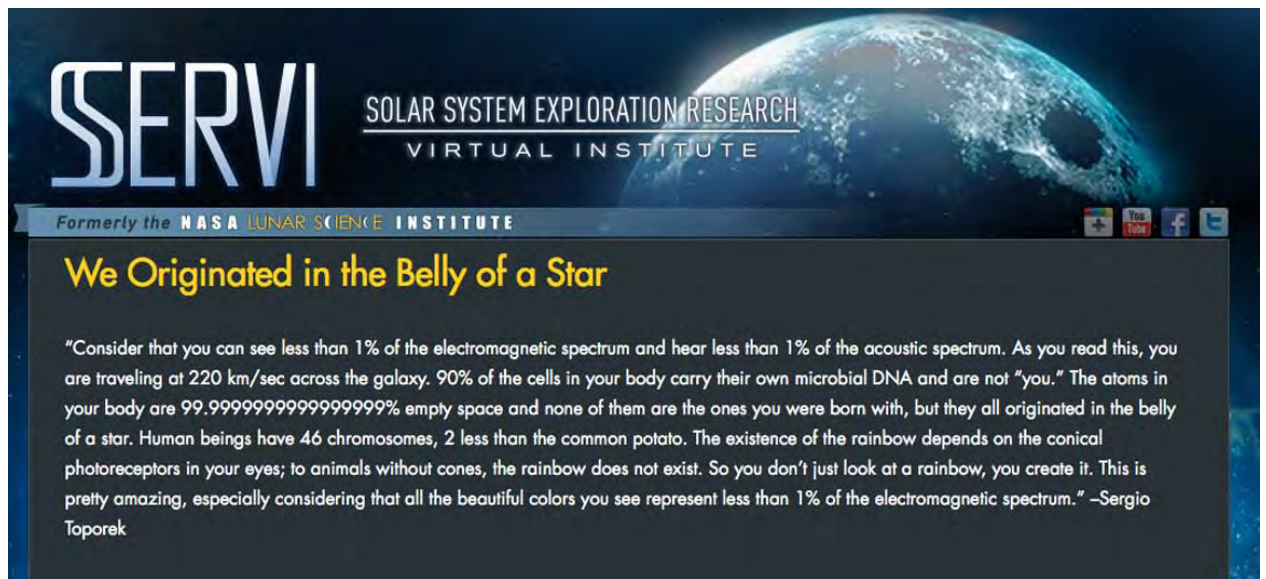


Figure 5: We Originated in the Belly of a Star

Somewhat ironically, these statistics have been arrived at through reductionist thinking, by focussing on a particular and ignoring the ‘field’ beyond, a form of analytic reduction whereby a complex whole is distilled into analysed parts.

Such hierarchical, dualistic, subject/object thinking has dominated our understanding for hundreds of years. Many of us are familiar with Descartes’s statement ‘Cogito ergo sum’ (‘I think therefore I am’), and the metaphysics associated with this is Cartesian dualism, the concept of mind and matter being opposed to each other as ‘two distinct but interacting substances’ (Blackburn 1996, p. 101).

‘Sensation’ was important to Descartes. Sensation allowed the subjective mind to connect with objective matter, and this notion of our senses being activated by external objects has permeated science, psychology and philosophy right up until the paradigm shift of which Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of ontology was a part.

Rather than our experience existing in a closed and private domain, Merleau-Ponty leads us beyond sensation to the ‘experiential milieu’, to an understanding of perception as being ‘*complex and relational*’ (Hass 2008, p. 32). In other words, in terms of Complexity Theory, our experience is a complex system.

To a certain extent, these ideas have fed into the more recent category of theories known as New Materialism (a term coined in the late 1990s), which has been widely applied to art and other forms of cultural production. While New Materialism is not a significant touchstone for

this research project, it is worth noting that authors such as Judith Butler (mentioned previously in relation to Merleau-Ponty) have participated in New Materialist discussions.

Another American theorist, Karen Barad, a physicist who researches the philosophy of science and feminism, also engages with New Materialist theories. Her theory of Agential Realism appears to share common ground with Complexity Theory and Merleau-Ponty. She contends that ‘the world is made up of phenomena, which are ‘the entanglement—the ontological inseparability—of intra-acting agencies’ (Barad n.d.). In particular, her following statement seems to echo Merleau-Ponty’s reversibility thesis:

All bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity, its performativity. Boundaries, properties, and meaning are differentially enacted through the intra-activity of mattering. Differentiating is not about radical exteriorities ... but rather what I call agential separability. That is, differentiating is not about Othering [sic.], separating, but on the contrary, about making connections and commitments. So the very nature of materiality itself is an entanglement.

(Dolphin & van der Tuin 2012, p. 69)

In addition to this, Barad’s description of ‘diffraction’ seems to resonate with Merleau-Ponty’s notion of dehiscence:

Diffraction, understood using quantum physics, is not just a matter of interference, but of entanglement, an ethico-onto-epistemological matter. This difference is very important. It underlines the fact that knowing is a direct material engagement, a cutting together-apart...

(Dolphin & van der Tuin 2012, p. 52)

The experimental processes adopted in this project may be interpreted as this type of cutting which, in Barad’s words, ‘open up and rework the agential conditions of possibility’ (Dolphin & van der Tuin 2012, p. 52). The video *Dehiscence* (2012) is one example, the ‘matterings’ videos another, discussed in Part 5.

Zen Buddhism is a blend of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism and Taoism which began in China, spread to Tibet, Korea, Vietnam and China (*Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism* 2004, p. 492) and then became popular in the West towards the middle of the 20th century. Zen practice attempts to overcome the 'either-or, ego-logical, dualistic paradigm of thinking' (Nagatomo 2014). The way in which this paradigm is dissolved is by adopting a 'holistic perspective in cognition, so that the Zen practitioner can celebrate, with a stillness of mind, a life of tending toward the concrete thing-events of everyday life and nature' (Nagatomo 2014).

Generally speaking, Zen cherishes simplicity and straightforwardness in grasping reality and acting on it 'here and now', for it believes that a thing-event that is immediately *presencing* before one's eyes or under one's foot is no other than an expression of suchness, i.e., it *is* such *that* it is showing its primordial mode of *being*. It also understands a specificity of thing-event to be a recapitulation of the whole; parts and the whole are to be lived in an inseparable relationship through an exercise of nondiscriminatory wisdom, without prioritizing the visible over the invisible, the explicit over the implicit, and vice versa.

(Nagatomo 2014)

Major commentators such as D.Z. Suzuki, Alan Watts and Carl Jung agree that, rather than a philosophy or religion, Zen Buddhism is a way of life that offers a liberation, openness, and it is hard to categorise according to Western thought (Rosemont 1970). According to Suzuki, 'Zen reveals itself in the most uninteresting and uneventful life of the plain man of the street' (Suzuki 1934, p. 45).

This resonates with and is echoed by the Fluxus attitude. John Cage's interest in Zen Buddhism influenced many of the early Fluxus artists such as George Brecht. As it also interconnects with the philosophical explorations of Merleau-Ponty, a Zen-like approach to process features as part of this project, such as the boundless 'moment of hesitation', the relaxed state of awareness which is described in Part 4 of this exegesis.

The connections between Merleau-Ponty's philosophy and Zen Buddhism have been well documented by a number of authors and scholars. Jason Wirth for example, who is a Professor of Philosophy at Seattle University, in his review of the book *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism*, comments that Merleau-Ponty 'independently rediscovered something that has long been articulated in many of the various strains of Mahāyāna Buddhist practice, namely the ambiguous interpenetration and dependent becoming of the self and its world' (Wirth 2009).

Similarities have been acknowledged between what Merleau-Ponty calls ambiguity, and the Buddhist theory of dependent co-arising (Kim 2009, p. 20). Additionally, Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh', in that it implies that the visible is inseparable from the invisible, is similar to Huayan Buddhist philosophy where it is stated that material form and the invisible are mutually interpenetrated (Kim 2009, p. 23).

Merleau-Ponty's 'reversibility thesis' also has a counterpart in Zen philosophy, for example:

Here...form is emptiness, and the very emptiness form: emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form. The same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses and consciousness.

(Conze 1959, pp. 162–163)

These notions resonate not only with my approach to practice but they also relate to the ways in which these themes are expressed, to *l'informe* (formlessness) or the dematerialised art object.

For Merleau-Ponty, being and nothingness are not mutually exclusive (such as they are for Sartre and Leibniz), instead 'being' coexists with 'non-being' (nothingness), they are not separate, they are two sides of the one coin, or the inside/outside of a glove. Mazis (2009) says that what Merleau-Ponty calls the 'flesh of the world' is the 'perpetual flux and flow' in which we all swim, it courses in and out of our own body and those of others (p. 184). As the world sounds itself through what are essentially our desubstantialised bodies, for Merleau-Ponty our embodiment in relation to the world is 'but a hollow, a fold, which has been made and can be unmade (Mazis 2009, p.185), and this is the same as in Zen Buddhism:

...Merleau-Ponty ...elaborate[s] how there can be...intertwining yet the uniqueness of every living being. It is that same logic of emptiness at the heart of Buddhism. It is also the same insistence that this sense will not emerge if we reify phenomena, but must be able to see them as vortical, unfolding, emerging, inseparable from all that is around them, evanescent, in flux, change, transition.

(Mazis 2009, p. 186)

wabi-sabi and zen buddhism

Sharing common ground with Merleau-Ponty's interrelatedness of all things is the Japanese Buddhist philosophical and aesthetic approach to practice that is *wabi-sabi*.

Objects and people are treated similarly in *wabi-sabi*.

(Koren 1994, p. 82)

Some of the characteristics of *wabi-sabi* that relate to the practical work undertaken for this research are:

- 'greatness' exists in the inconspicuous and overlooked details
- appreciation of the cosmic order
- focus on the intrinsic and ignore material hierarchy
- suggestion of a natural process
- irregular
- unpretentious
- simple

(Koren 1994, pp. 41–42)

Practitioners of the *wabi-sabi* aesthetic accept imperfection, incompleteness and transience. While traditionally most *wabi-sabi* artworks are objects, in this research *wabi-sabi* offers a philosophical approach to practice and underpins the expression of these ideas in a 'form' that is formless. My work is concerned more with these principles than aesthetic qualities or permanence.

The works in this project, although simple, allude to complexity. They are prompted by the emergent phenomena of everyday life, are informed by Merleau-Ponty, and are strongly influenced by Zen and the Fluxus attitude (discussed in Part 3 and Part 4).

WHAT COMES (IN)TO MATTER

attitudinal flux

This part of the exegesis discusses the attitude with which this project is infused. It focuses on the Situationists and Fluxus as being the most relevant, but other artists such as Marcel Duchamp and John Cage are included as they relate to Zen and the emergence of Fluxus. Mention is also made of *l'informe* (formlessness) in relation both to attitude and practical exploration, as many of the outcomes of the project are 'formless'.

As I believe it is the complexity of the Fluxus modes of practice that feeds the Fluxus attitude, Fluxus will first of all be briefly examined through the lens of Complexity Theory. Along with a Zen-like approach, the Fluxus attitude is a principle touchstone of this research as it has influenced and underpinned the practical experimentation for this project. This is discussed in Part 4 of the exegesis.

The experimental openness and diversity of the Fluxus networks, output and attitude that commenced in the 1960s could be said to have paved the way for many forms of cultural production today. The attitude of today's artworld is discussed and selected examples of contemporary practices are presented for comparison at the end of this part.

How these attitudinal fluxes interconnect with the practical explorations of this research are discussed in Part 5 where specific comparative examples that clarify or differentiate the outcomes of this project are provided.

the situationists

The Situationists International group has some relevance to this project, in particular notions of the *dérive* and *détournement* that formed part of their activities and their concept of the 'spectacle' that critiqued capitalist society.

Active until 1972, the group was formed in 1957 by the merging of two groups, the Letterists and the London Psychogeographical Association, psychogeography being 'the study of the

precise effects of geographical setting, consciously managed or not, acting directly on the mood and behaviour of the individual' (City College of San Francisco n.d.).

The 'matterings' videos in 'What is within the moment of hesitation?', although related to this approach in terms of the effect on the person, follow a lighter, less rigorous path than that of psychogeography. The moments they capture are not consciously sought or managed, the 'matterings' are only simple recordings of various phenomena that happen to emerge in everyday life rather than any attempt to get to know a particular locale or any meticulous recording of various found elements.

The Situationists expanded the notion of psychogeography through what they called the *dérive*. The French noun *dérive* means 'drift' (Collins Robert French Dictionary 2008, p. 284), which suggests a more loose approach to their meandering through the streets of Paris, either individually or in groups, noting how the environment could impact on one's mood and behaviour (Debord 1956). Other sources indicate the term was also used 'to designate the duration of a prolonged exercise of such an experiment' (City College of San Francisco n.d.). For the Situationists, the *dérive* was about discoveries in an urban landscape, and Guy Debord suggested that to conduct a *dérive* people must 'first set aside all work and leisure activities, clearing their minds of all their usual motives for movement and action' (Baffled Geography n.d.). These are aspects that differentiate the Situationist process from the one taken in this project. Site specificity is a limitation that is not imposed in the 'matterings' videos, for example, as these sorts of phenomena can occur for anyone, in any place, at any time, whether at home or in the wider environment, urban or otherwise. Neither is it necessary to forgo activities in order to experience such phenomena. However, I would suggest that maintaining an open attitude can help to tune one's awareness so that any 'resonating' phenomena are recognised, and this is something that does to some extent echo the mental attitude of the *flâneur* (literally 'idle stroller') in the *dérive*.

Connections too may be made between the attitude taken in this project and Situationists founding member Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) in which he critiqued capitalism and rejected art as commodity. The Situationists, by means of these new situations, sought to bring about 'a revolutionary reordering of life, politics, and art'; Debord's aim was to 'wake up the spectator who has been drugged by spectacular images', and these particularly formed moments were characterised by 'a sense of self-consciousness of existence within a particular environment or ambience' (Ford 1950). Such an awareness of the moment ('the moment of hesitation') has relevance to this research, but without such political intent.

Détournement is also a key element of the Situationists' practice. The aim of *détournement* is to 'negate the ideologic conditions of artistic production, the fact that all artworks are ultimately commodities; but on the other hand, it must negate this negation and produce something that is politically educative' (Oxford Reference, n.d.). In other words, the aim was to destabilise the 'cultural power élite', the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals. An example of *détournement* is Debord and Jorn's book *Mémoires* which is made up of 'prefabricated elements', in essence images and words from magazines. On each page the writing travels in various directions (later echoed by the graphic style of early Fluxus publications which subsequently influenced the 'yellow stickie' designs in *The This Project* in this research, discussed in Part 5) and the phrases are incomplete (reminiscent of the later explorations of John Cage in his performed lecture *45' For a Speaker*) (Cage 1961, pp. 46–192).

There is also a connection between the Situationists' 'situation' and the 'moment'. In an *October* magazine interview in 1997, French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre was asked:

Did the Situationist theory of constructing situations have a direct relationship with your theory of "moments"?

Lefebvre replied:

Yes, that was the basis of our understanding. They more or less said to me during discussions ... "What you call 'moments,' we call 'situations,' ... We want to create new moments."

(Ross 1997, p. 72)

According to his biographer, Rémi Hess, Lefebvre was preoccupied with the idea that one could live one's life lucidly as a work of art (Hess 1988, p.37). His theory of moments outlines a 'plurality of relatively privileged moments' and proposes an 'interdisciplinary understanding of artistic production' (Léger 2011). These are themes that emerge and converge in this project, as it proposes there are many moments available to anyone at any time in which a particular resonance may be felt. Also relevant is the interdisciplinary (intermedial) approach that frequently appears in the articulation of the exploration of this research.

While there are similarities between the approach to practice I have adopted in this project and that of the Situationists, there are also differences. The Situationists' 'moments' were constructed situations first and openness to emergent phenomena second: 'a moment of life, concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of unitary environment and the free play of events' (Definitions of Situationist Terminology n.d.). The experimental

approach I have adopted is to be open to emergent phenomena first and then respond (or not) to phenomena that present themselves in the moment.

Also, unlike the Situationists, I have a less political intent, however, one might glimpse the light touch of a playful devalourisation in this projects' works. Possibly too, there are connections to what Debord called '*ultradétournement*', the circumstances in which *détournement* applies itself to everyday life, in that the process as a whole embodies a quiet resistance to the status quo of many aspects of the contemporary artworld.

fluxus

As has been well documented elsewhere, the name 'Fluxus' was first applied by George Maciunas to an international network of artists working across media in the early 1960s:

Fluxus has been described as being 'more open and international in scope (and counting more female artists among its participants) than any other avant-garde or neo-avant-garde since Dadaism...'

(Foster, Krauss, Bois & Buchloh 2004, p. 456).

But it is more than this, it is a way of life (Higgins 2002), it is an attitude (Smith 1998). And it is complex.

Fluxus remains the most complex—and therefore widely underestimated—art movement (or "nonmovement", as it calls itself) of the early to mid-sixties...

(Foster, Krauss, Bois & Buchloh 2004, p. 456)

In this exegesis there is no room to describe the many complexities of Fluxus. However, in this section, I will outline the Fluxus-related issues that are most closely connected to this project.

First of all I will consider how Fluxus relates to compositional complexity (for example its networks), and secondly to simple complexity (for example its event scores). This is followed by selected examples that serve to compare the attitude of Fluxus with contemporary art practices for which Fluxus could be said to have paved the way.

fluxus and compositional complexity

According to Meinard Kuhlmann (2010), compositional complexity is the type of system where the system has very many components, and complex behaviours result from their interactions. An example is the Fluxus community which is:

...an international community of experimental artists seeking to close the gap between art and life by bypassing the elitism of the museum and gallery system.

(Walker Art Centre 2005)

But it is not that simple, even from Fluxus's beginnings. Where did it all start?

Several early 20th century ideologies and characteristics contributed to the formation of the Fluxus attitude, significantly those of Marcel Duchamp, Dada and John Cage, as indicated by Fluxus artist Ben Vautier:

Without Cage, Marcel Duchamp, and Dada, Fluxus would not exist ... Fluxus exists and creates from the knowledge of this post-Duchamp (the readymade) and post-Cage (the depersonalization of the artist) situation.

(Vautier 1978, p. 52)

This mention of the depersonalisation of the artist relates to my decision to ascribe the pseudonym PringaDa as 'author' of the works in this project, to indicate their autonomy (discussed in Part 4).

In 1913 Duchamp wrote himself a note: 'Can one make works which are not works of "art"?' (Larson 2012, p. 44). This inception of the 'readymade' caused a paradigm shift and ultimately a destabilisation of the art object. Kay Larson likens this question to that of a Zen master:

Then what is art? Something we value? Something we've worked hard over? Something 'elevated'? Where do these mental valuations come from? Why do we believe in them or invest them with credibility?

(Larson 2012, p. 44)

These are questions that are integral to this project.

Duchamp and John Cage met in 1942 and became close friends. While Duchamp never directly acknowledged Zen as an influence in his work, John Cage maintains he had a Zen attitude (Larson 2012).

Larson also suggests that Duchamp's *Fountain* is more than a subversive statement, that it is related to Zen as it was referred to as *Buddha of the Bathroom* in *The Blind Man* (a Dadaist magazine published by Duchamp and his associates in 1917) (Larson 2012, pp. 46–47). Apart from the Zen connection, Kay Larson identifies another influence that Duchamp had on Cage:

Duchamp's revolutionary resistance to being a "good artist", his surgical intention to "make works which are not works of 'art'," and his skillful poetics of ordinary things... had long since informed Cage's view of life.

(Larson 2012, p. 98)

By merging form with philosophical and conceptual concerns, the readymade paved the way for the Fluxus attitude:

If any one characteristic of the form is consistent, it is not only formal, but also philosophical. The readymade unites material concerns with the invisible function of thought. It avoids participating in what Duchamp called "retinal" culture—the development of a solely visual and stylistic aesthetic in favor of one that unites material, physical, and formal concerns with ideas, philosophies, concepts, and feelings. Duchamp's point, we seem to agree, was for us to get caught up in a conceptual effort to consider what we *can and can't see*, and what happens when we encounter something familiar in an unexpected way. *It is what it is. Or is it?* is a dialogue with the readymade form, seeing it not as a collection of static objects, but as a practice of displacement that turns thought into form and as physical evidence of conceptual exercise.

(Contemporary Arts Museum Houston 2012)

This notion of 'what happens when we encounter something familiar in an unexpected way' is something I have explored in the 'matterings' videos (discussed in Part 5).

Many early Fluxus artists had studied with John Cage, who taught classes in Experimental Composition at the New School for Social Research in New York. His teachings and methods have had a significant effect on many artists from the 1950s onwards.

John Cage is a major influence for this research project, both through his philosophy (connections with Zen Buddhism) and his approach to practice. Cage had studied with D.Z. Suzuki (credited with bringing Zen to the West), he knew Alan Watts (another Zen practitioner) and had become increasingly influenced by Zen Buddhism, having been drawn to its wit, humour and the serious insights to be gained through play and paradox. Anna Dezeuze

maintains that John Cage is a 'crucial influence for any do-it-yourself artists' (Dezeuze 2010, p. 9).

Owen Smith says that a particular date for when Fluxus began cannot be determined (Smith 1998, p. 26). The word 'fluxus' comes from the Latin *fluere*, to flow and the naming of Fluxus came about after George Maciunas, who had been seeking a name for his proposed 'revolution', opened a dictionary at random one day, and happened across the word 'fluxus'. It is as if this arose like an emergent phenomenon from a complex situation/system. Although Maciunas wished Fluxus to be an art movement, the very nature of Fluxus activities and the attitude of those associated with it defies such limitations. Fluxus's flow was and still is one of freedom, of open-endedness and diversity. It is as if it came from nowhere and yet everywhere, and continues to be 'nowhere' and yet everywhere.

Fluxus did not suddenly appear as a result of ideological interests such as the Situationists, it evolved. Early Fluxus artist and theorist Dick Higgins said of that time:

Fluxus started with the work, and then came together, applying the name Fluxus to work which already existed. It was as if it started in the middle of the situation, rather than at the beginning.

(Dick Higgins 1986)

Unlike some of its predecessors, such as the Dadaists and Situationists, Fluxus therefore was not an ideological program (Smith 1998) and its naming only came about because of Maciunas's insistence that a mechanism was necessary 'to present and disseminate a growing number of new works certain artists were producing' (Smith 1998, p.25). First and foremost, Fluxus is a way of life. To quote Dick Higgins once more, '...Fluxus is a way of doing things...'.

The number of artists who identify with Fluxus has continued to grow over the years and, since the birth of the internet in the 1990s this number has grown considerably. Some of these people continue to meet in locations around the world to celebrate the attitude of Fluxus in real time, such as at the annual *Fluxfest* in Chicago. Fluxus is becoming increasingly complex.

Networks

Examples of structures within the complex system of the Fluxus community include internal networks based on common interest or practice.

One distinguishing feature of many Fluxus activities is that they operate in the spaces between media. To describe this, Dick Higgins coined the term 'intermedia' and in describing Fluxus and intermedia, Higgins drew the following diagrams. Similarities are noticeable between these diagrams and Lawrence Hass's diagram which depicts Merleau-Ponty's theory of the visible and invisible (in Part 2 of this exegesis).

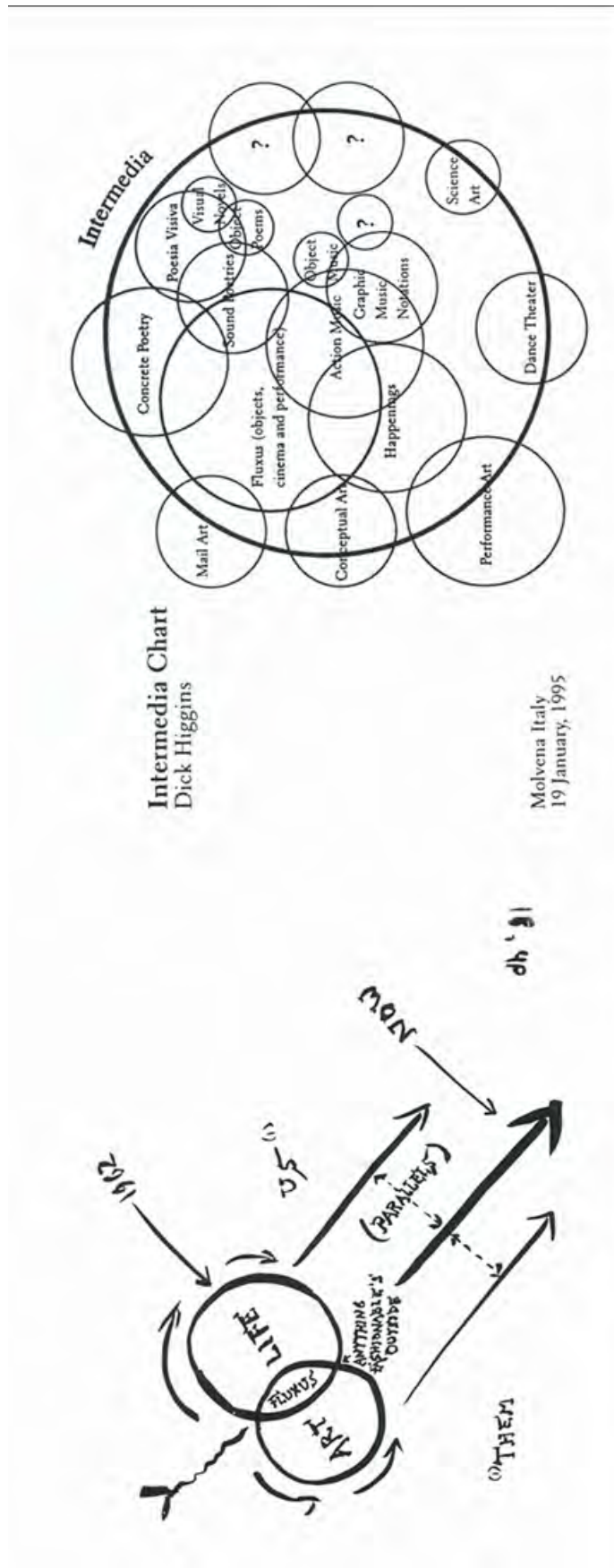


Figure 6: Dick Higgins, *[Fluxus Chart]*, 1981. Ink on Paper, 45.7 x 58.4 cm

Dick Higgins, *Intermedia Chart*, 1995. Postcard, 10.7 x 15.3 cm

Courtesy of the Estate of Dick Higgins

Some works in this project relate to intermedia, such as *FluxMusic* (2011), an object-based work that alludes to playing a CD but is an invitation to play in another way. Another is the performance score *F.A.C.E.* (2011). Both of these works are discussed in Part 5.

Engaging with intermedia has resulted in many sub-groups within today's Fluxus community. For instance, a few years ago the OpenFluxus group (openfluxus.org) had 18 sub-groups, including Event Score Appreciation Group, Ray Johnson is Alive!, DodaDada/Embassy, and SoundsNoiseSilence. As at January 2015, the 'ning' platform of the IUOMA group (International Union of Mail Artists) has over 3792 members and 270 sub-groups ranging from Rubber Stamps and Collaborative Mail Art Books to Minimal Mail Art and Libros de Artista (IUOMA 2015). More recently the international Fluxus community has moved into social media platforms, most notably Facebook where, as at January 2015, there is a wide range of groups covering divergent interests.

What these diverse networks both reveal and facilitate is a freedom, a freedom of art and life.

Fluxus saw no distinction between art and life, and believed that routine, banal, and everyday actions should be regarded as artistic events, declaring that "everything is art and everyone can do it".

(Foster et al. 2004, p. 456)

This mention of art and life, everyday actions as artistic events and the notion that 'everyone can do it' are key concepts for this research project as I maintain an attitude of openness that encourages inclusion rather than engaging in any attempt to impose. This is unlike the attitude of, for example, Joseph Beuys who famously stated that 'Everyone is an artist'.

According to German art critic Heiner Stachelhaus, what Beuys meant by this statement was that 'everyone possessed creative faculties that must be identified and developed'

(Stachelhaus 1987, p. 63). Stachelhaus continues:

Beuys's statement "Everyone is an artist" — which had aroused so much attention and which Beuys found was still so widely misunderstood — refers to the reshaping of the "social body," in which everyone not only can but must participate, "so that we can carry out the transformation as quickly as possible"... [Beuys's] prime concern was the artistic education of humankind. Not until art had been integrated into every area of education and life could there be an effective spiritual and democratic society.

(Stachelhaus 1987, pp. 66 & 67)

It is clear that Beuys saw himself as a socio-cultural leader, a 'shaman', on a mission to convert others and thereby save the world. Beuys's attitude and his emphasis on the 'social body' seems to connect with some practices of today, such as community arts and relational aesthetics, the latter of which will be discussed in a later section of this part. This project fits within neither of these realms.

The Fluxus attitude has no such intent, being instead strongly connected to Zen Buddhism. Despite his early socio-political intentions as revealed in his Fluxus manifesto (below), George Maciunas was later to state that Fluxus is 'more like Zen than Dada' (*The Art Story*, n.d.).

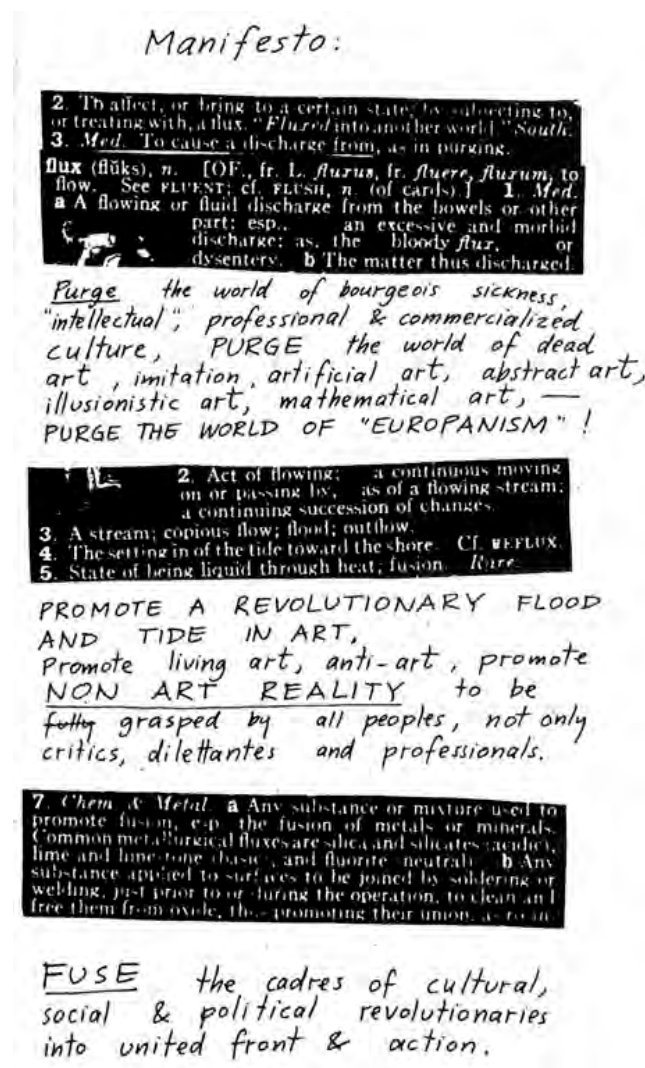


Figure 7: George Maciunas, Fluxus Manifesto, 1963

The Fluxus attitude that persisted, while not pointed in any particular political direction may be seen to exude a socio-political stance through its simple yet complex *modus operandi*. In 1981 Dick Higgins identified nine characteristics of Fluxus works. These were subsequently added to by Ken Friedman to result in the following list, which he calls ‘ideas of Fluxus’:

- globalism
- unity of art and life
- intermedia
- experimentalism
- chance
- playfulness
- simplicity
- implicativeness
- exemplativism
- specificity
- presence in time
- musicality

(Friedman 2007)

(see Appendix 1 for further explanation of these characteristics)

It is clear to see that many of these overlap with elements of *wabi-sabi*, the Japanese Buddhist aesthetic and approach to practice, such as irregularity, unpretentiousness, simplicity. *Wabi-sabi* is outlined in Part 2 of this exegesis.

What has persisted over time, therefore, is that the Fluxus attitude extends the notion of what art can be and by doing so resists the constructs, demands and values of the ‘art establishment’. This latter point is relevant to this project, both in terms of the type and ‘form-non-form’ of the works and the manner in which those works are shared. Like many artists who identify with Fluxus, I resist the packaging of today’s artworld. As Ken Friedman states:

Like soap or automobiles, art is marketed under brand names. Salable [sic.] art is expected to embody brand values. Many of the critics and curators who see themselves as opponents of market mechanisms and corporate branding expect art to be packaged in readily identifiable formats and brand-value packages.

(Friedman n.d.)

This recently discovered quote from Friedman with its reference to soap carries a serendipitous link to an early exploration in this research which was a critique of the artworld. It is a constructed video called *Speech Bomb Credo* (2012) in which I blew soap bubbles (representing the Fluxus attitude) in response to an onslaught of 'isms' that I see as being associated with today's artworld (documented in the 'journal' for this project).

fluxus, simple complexity and the score

The previous section outlined one of the types of complexity (compositional complexity) in relation to the beginnings of Fluxus, its concept that art includes the everyday, its networks and its characteristics.

The second type of complexity according to Meinard Kuhlmann (2010) is the simple type of system that has only a few simple components but exhibits complex behaviour in time. An example of this is the simple Fluxus score. Of the event score, contemporary composer, musician and artist Matthew Lee Knowles says:

Event scores seemed a natural way to go, as they connect all the dots – they are music, they are instructional, they are poetry and, like fractals, can create infinite complexity from absolutely maximum simplicity. They span the spectrum from modest to grand and can be interpreted to suit the performer/participant. Perhaps, most importantly, they have a home within the world of Fluxus, which gave me the freedom and allowed me the permission to do many of the things I have done.

(Matthew Lee Knowles 2012)

Anna Dezeuze alludes to the 'complex dynamics between order and disorder, control and play, organisation and risk, which lie at the heart of the do-it-yourself artwork' (Dezeuze 2010, p. 15). She cites Fluxus artist George Brecht's scores as an example:

Brecht's "art of multiple implications" — like the "fields of possibility" set up by the "open work" — hinges on structure, made with simple words or forms, that can evoke a variety of meanings or take on a number of visible arrangements.

(Dezeuze 2010, p. 59).

The 'event score' has become one of the forms of art-non-art that have come to permeate and define Fluxus practice. Event scores are intermedia: they operate between art and life; similar to recipes, they are proposals, propositions or instructions (Friedman 2002) that invite others

to act, consider or contemplate. While precursors of ‘art-as-instruction’ are historically evident (for example Duchamp’s *Speculations* (Obrist 2013, p. 16), the ‘event score’ gained momentum through classes taught by John Cage at the New School for Social Research, New York in 1956–1960.

I believe the most interesting and effective (in that they are open-ended and invite varied interpretations) scores have brevity in common, their Zen kōan-like quality and playfulness speaking of the essence of the Fluxus attitude. Scores by Yoko Ono and George Brecht in particular expand the experience of the ‘Zen moment’ in the everyday. What this means is that:

...the participant’s focus on an everyday activity led to a sudden immersion or absorption in a unique temporal experience. This temporal dimension is that of flow, in which past, present and future can be contained in a single moment that is experienced outside the continuity of everyday life, while at the same time heightening our consciousness of everyday life...

(Dezeuze 2010, pp. 214–215)

Ina Blom describes Fluxus art as ‘immersive... [where] cognitive boundaries dividing self and work or work and surroundings might, temporarily, fade out or be displaced’ (Blom 1998, p. 63). This blurring of boundaries has a strong relationship to the later ontological philosophy of Merleau-Ponty in which he explores the intertwining of bodies, matter, consciousness and unconsciousness.

An example is Yoko Ono’s *Breath Piece* (1964) which consists simply of the word ‘breathe’. One source claims that this ‘evokes Duchamp’s claim that he had given up art to become a “respirator,” because, as he said, “each breath is a work which is inscribed nowhere”’ (Zimmerli Art Museum, 2012). Yoko Ono’s scores blur the boundaries between object and subject. Her emphasis is frequently on how we relate to the world.

Yoko Ono is a major influence on this research, from the slowing down of the footage of her early FluxFilms to her scores, and also her response to the question ‘What is within the moment of hesitation’ which connects with the *Soundings* series. This will be discussed in Part 5.

Yoko Ono’s scores are often Zen-like, as are those of George Brecht who is another major influence. George Brecht studied experimental composition with John Cage in 1958–1959 and he and Cage ‘independently discovered the teachings of D.Z. Suzuki and conceptions of chance within Zen Buddhism’ (Ouzounian 2011, p. 205). Brecht called his event scores ‘structures of

experience’ and described his art as a ‘deeply personal, infinitely complex, and essentially mysterious, exploration of experience’ (Kaprow, Watts & Brecht pp. 153–160). Similarly to Brecht, this project also explores experience.

There are connections here to Complexity Theory, Zen and Merleau-Ponty. And to the notion of ‘moment’ through their similarity to haiku:

Brecht's scores...bear a strong resemblance to Japanese haiku, poems characterised by a fixed, three-line structure and a reliance on the suggestive power of a limited number of words and images...

(Dezeuze 2010, p. 59)

Whereas a haiku is ‘an image of a concrete moment in life’ (Alan Watts, a Zen practitioner and contemporary of John Cage) the scores of both Ono and Brecht act as a signal.

Rather than an image of a concrete moment in life, [they are] a signal preparing one for the moment itself. Event scores prepare one for an event to happen in one’s own now.

(Brecht cited in Vazquez 2011)

This resonates with the research question ‘What is within the moment of hesitation?’ and the scores that emerged during the course of the project.

Brecht’s scores open up possibilities by inviting people to experience these ‘moments in life’ at any time, present or future. For example, Brecht’s score *Drip Music (Second Version)* (1959) has the single-word instruction/proposition: ‘dripping’. This score does not necessarily have to be an action performed by someone (although it can be): the implication is that anything dripping anywhere can be a realisation of this score. The work *Drip Drawing III* (2013) which appears in this project, is both an homage to Brecht as well as a performance of his earlier score *Drip Music (Version 1)* (1959).

Examples of scores that are influenced by Ono and Brecht are two that I sent to the *Roanoke Marginal Arts Festival* in the US in 2012:

Contingency (GFC):

Put a coin in a corner.
Repeat (another coin, another corner) until no coins are left.

PringaDa 2012

Breaking the Rules:

Ruler.
Snap.

PringaDa 2012

By means of the score 'Fluxus could also dissolve into an existential nothingness' (Zimmerli Art Museum 2012). This is a statement which leads us to consider *l'informe*, or formlessness.

l'informe (formlessness)

The concept of formlessness has particular significance for this project as it relates strongly to the articulation of these ideas in practice.

Formlessness in art has been explored by several researchers, including Lucy Lippard's examination of conceptual art (1973), the investigation by Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss into *l'informe* (1997) and Anna Dezeuze in her current project for a book provisionally titled *The 'Almost Nothing': Precariousness in Art since the 1960s*. Jack Burnham also dealt with the concept of formlessness by describing 'systems aesthetics', anticipating what is known as relational art or relational aesthetics today, an 'art [which] does not reside in material entities, but in relations between people and between people and the components of their environment' (Burnham 1968, p. 165).

Some sixty years ago, French Surrealist dissident, writer and thinker Georges Bataille undertook a philosophical development of the term *l'informe* (formlessness). As part of this, Bataille was interested in the abject and the scatological as a means to subvert power, to de-classify through what he termed 'base materialism'.

Base materialism (of which the *informe* is the most concrete manifestation) has the job of de-class(ify)ing, which is to say, simultaneously lowering and liberating from all ontological prisons, from any '*devoir être*' (role model).

(Bois & Krauss 1997, p. 49)

The term abjection literally means 'the state of being cast off' (Tate n.d.). This abjection, this 'state of being cast off' is not only something that is done to others, it can be a determined choice, a way of working.

There is a connection between Bataille's base materialism and George Maciunas's exclamation in his Fluxus Manifesto, a call to 'purge the world of bourgeois sickness, "intellectualised", professional and commercialized culture' and 'promote living art, anti-art, non-art reality to be grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilittantes and professionals'. Examples of this form of

object base materialism emanating from the Fluxus attitude are Ken Friedman's *Flux Clippings* (1968/circa 1969) and Robert Watts's *Female Underpants* (c. 1966):



Figure 8: Ken Friedman, *Flux Clippings*, 1968/circa 1969,
plastic box, offset on paper, bunions,
4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 x $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection



Figure 9: Robert Watts, *Female Underpants*, c.1966, screen print
on fabric.

An even more recent example, although not directly related to the Fluxus attitude but exhibiting a similar sense of humour and abjection, is Sarah Lucas's *Chicken Knickers* (1997).



Figure 10: Sarah Lucas, *Chicken Knickers*, 1997, photograph on paper, 426 x 426 mm.

The video *L'incongruité de la langue #2* (2011) is an example in this project which relates to these concerns. It is discussed in Part 5.

L'informe is identified by Bois and Krauss (1997) as a thread running through 20th century art. To Krauss, the term *l'informe* is not merely object in the sense in which it was used by Bataille. In a 1996 article in *October* magazine, she argues that rather than positioning form against content, 'formless' is a third term that avoids such dualist thinking. She indicates that this stems from Julia Kristeva's interest in abjection as a borderline, intermediary position that is 'neither subject nor object' (Krauss 1996, p. 91).

This is a space that is probed in the *Modalities of Presence* (2013) series of works for this project (discussed in Part 5), where the still images are not intended to be 'pretty' and the screen-captured handwriting slowly reveals the emergent empathic properties of a liminal state.

The object-as-intermediary is [...] thus a matter of both uncrossable boundaries and undifferentiable substances [...] a subject position that seems to cancel the very subject it is operating to locate, and an object relation from which the definability of object (and thus its objecthood) disappears.

(Krauss 1996, p. 92)

Another dimension of Krauss's reasoning is explored in the '*l'incongruité de la langue*' works in this research (see Part 5), through which the difficulties of language are explored.

...the connection between subject and object, whether subject be the psyche and object be the soma, or subject be a conscious being and object, its word.

(Krauss 1996, p. 91)

Zen practitioner D.Z. Sukuki also spoke of formlessness, which was his translation of the Chinese *wu-hsing*, as representing the 'suchness' of the world:

"By formlessness is meant to be in form and yet to be detached from it", Suzuki explained...because what is "formless" simply exceeds any concepts of form.

(Dezeuze, n.d., p. 63)

These notions seem to resonate with Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh of the world' and to art's autonomy:

"I am seeing" is the analogous statement at the level of visual form. Reflexive modernism wants to cancel the naturalism in the field of the object in order to bring about a newly heightened sense of the subject, a form that creates the illusion that it is nothing except the fact that "I am seeing [it]". The entropic, simulacral move, however, is to float the field of seeing in the absence

of the subject; it wants to show that in the automatism of infinite repetition, the disappearance of the first person is the mechanism that triggers formlessness.

(Bois & Krauss 1997, p. 78)

Artistic expressions can provide a vehicle for such notions. When Merleau-Ponty speaks of artistic practice he demonstrates how art and everyday human experience are 'continuous in their interrogation of the world' (Gilmore 2005, p. 315).

In their book *Formless* (1997), Bois and Krauss mention briefly that early Fluxus artists experimented with film (for example Yoko Ono's *Eye Blink*, 1966). However, and interestingly from a complexity point of view, is the authors' statement that they have not included 'the tireless activity of the Fluxus group' because they were unable to show 'an infinite overproduction without instantly betraying and limiting it' (Bois & Krauss 1997, p. 24).

In a long series of what might be called formless interventions, Fluxus artist Ben Vautier extended the notion of Duchamp's readymades by preparing certificates that could be used to authenticate everyday objects as works of art, including blank postcards, empty wine bottles, dust and holes (Walker Art Center 2005). Of particular relevance to the context of this project, he also declared that the 'absence of art' is art:

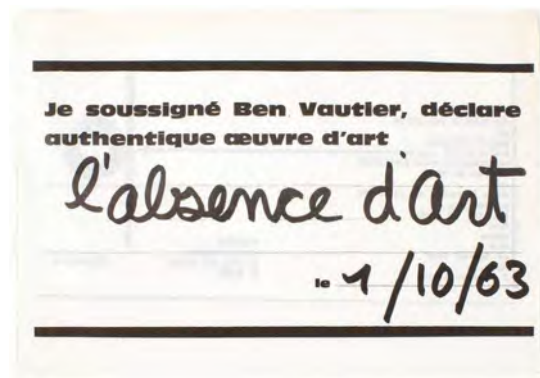


Figure 11: Ben Vautier, *Flux Certificate*, 1963, sheet 5.125 x 7.375 inches, letterpress on paper
[trans. I the undersigned Ben Vautier, declare an authentic work of art the absence of art]

In this project I propose, similarly to Vautier, that the emergent phenomena of the everyday that can be experienced by anyone at any time (that are not currently recognised as art) are also art.

attitude and today's artworld

To clarify the attitude and outcomes of this project and how they may differ from other expressions of contemporary art, it is necessary to touch on issues associated with today's artworld. Maintaining the integrity of an approach that is strongly influenced by the Fluxus attitude has been important throughout this project, and this approach runs counter to many of the attitudes that are commonly found in the contemporary artworld.

[Attitude is]...a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols.

(Hogg & Vaughan 2005, p. 150).

The Fluxus attitude offers an alternative approach to practice. There exists a thriving international community of artists who identify with Fluxus whose networks and activities are easily accessible via the internet. These networks operate outside the bounds of the conventional artworld and offer artists an alternative way to connect, collaborate and share work throughout the world. That is, if the Fluxus attitude fits that of the artist.

Some of the concerns that arise out of today's artworld are considered below, for comparative purposes, along with comments based on my own experience of engaging with those who identify with Fluxus and from participation in Fluxus projects and events (a selected list of these is included in Appendix 2).

Financial concerns

The rise of capitalism has played a large part in the formation of today's artworld, which may be seen as one of the systems/symptoms of capitalism. In this system, art has become 'cultural capital' wherein a gallery is really a shop, an art fair is a shopping mall and art is a luxury product (Stallabrass 2012). In this marketplace, artists can either become brands themselves and/or be branded as part of a curator or gallery's 'stable'. Non-commercial galleries find themselves having to court corporate sponsorship in order to be sustainable. Artist-run initiatives (ARIs), although offering artists more autonomy, are forced to compete for sparse annual funding, and inadequate funding means ARI members must pay to rent gallery spaces for their exhibitions, which is not always a viable option.

Living and working in today's world poses many dilemmas for artists, especially for those who do not subscribe to the values and attitudes of a capitalist society, albeit they must find ways to survive within it and share their work. Many artists struggle to find a balance between making a living and making art, for the two are not always compatible bedfellows. While sharing work through today's Fluxus networks might afford artists a means to bypass the concerns and constraints of the artworld, there are no financial gains to be had. Participation costs nothing but artist fees are not offered nor are they expected, and artists contribute their works free of charge. Works normally remain in the hands of the exhibition organisers and are sometimes added to collections.

Elitism

Apart from economic rationalist considerations, the artworld adheres to constructs of value that are based on knowledge, power and conferral (Preziosi & Farago 2012). Tied in with this is the notion of prestige, which is about recognition, status, reputation, importance and influence. Such a value system may be seen as elitist.

Within today's artworld, artworks are often curated/selected, interpreted, mediated and exhibited in venues that some potential audiences may see as too 'exclusive' to dare enter.

On top of this, unfortunately often what passes for criticism is in fact promotion (Preziosi & Farago 2012). As noted by Bishop (2010), in the artworld today curators can become stars in their own right (p. 274) and curatorial intervention can sometimes eclipse the artwork. Curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, for example, says 'The more I can disappear, the less my signature is there, the better...' (Obrist 2011) and yet his name appears in large type on the front covers of his 'conversation series' that document his interviews with artists (Morgan 2012). In this situation, in this series, it is as if the art itself has become secondary.

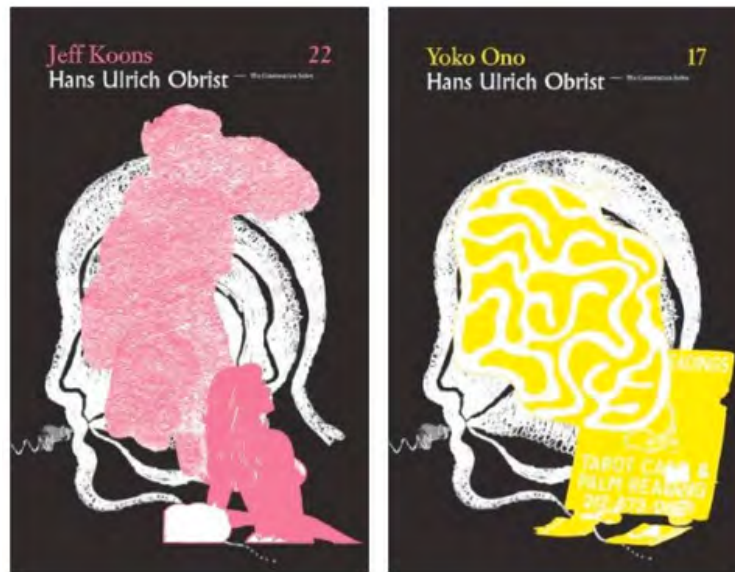


Figure 12: Hans Ulrich Obrist 2009,
Koons: Conversation Series 22 and *Ono: Conversation Series 17*,
 Buchhandlung Walther König

Although the organisers of Fluxus exhibitions and events are often referred to as curators, their role seems to be to co-ordinate the collection of work and their hanging/displaying. The organiser's role as mediator is essential but minimal intervention is apparent (unless implicitly invited as in the work *FluxMusic* (2011) in this project). Not only are most contemporary Fluxus exhibitions or participatory projects open to all, they are often in unconventional (non-gallery) spaces, thereby maximising audience potential and democratising the experience of art for the audience.

Invitation to participate is usually facilitated via the internet, a process that offers increased potential for the inclusion of a variety of artworks. Unlike the conventional artworld in which critical appraisal/approval is sought, with Fluxus events critical reviews appear to be seldom and individuals' contributions to exhibitions are not isolated for promotional purposes. The participating artist needs to be able to adopt a Zen-like attitude of acceptance by 'letting go', not seeking acknowledgment or approval. This is because documentation of events can be sketchy, and uncertainty exists as to whether, for example, submitted scores have actually been performed at a performance event. For me, this is not a concern as I believe in keeping the emphasis on the artwork rather than artist.

Competition

Central to capitalist thinking is competition, mostly in economic or business terms but this also applies to the artworld. While there is no doubt that some competition can raise standards and stimulate ideas, if the artist adopts too competitive an attitude this can have a negative effect. Kübra Gümüşay (2014), consultant for social media, innovation and communication at the University of Oxford, suggests why this can be the case:

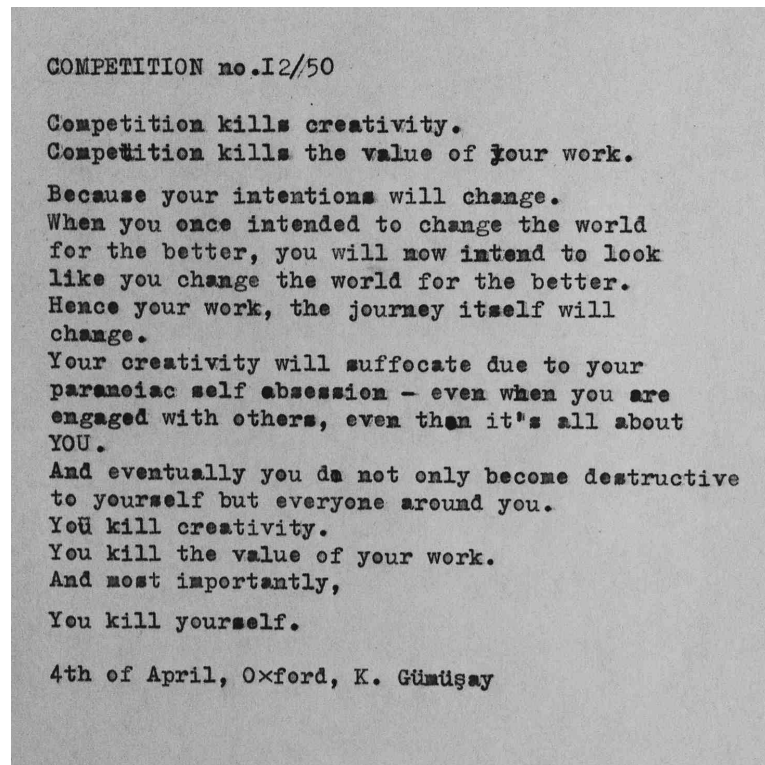


Figure 13: Kübra Gümüşay, #12 Competition | 50, 50 thoughts series, 2014

When an artist changes intent and means of expression solely in order to compete more successfully or be seen as more ‘trendy’, I agree with Gümüşay (2014) when she says in her comment to this blog post that competition for appreciation in people’s eyes is ‘sick’. Entering art competitions if the work ‘fits’ is one thing, embarking on a journey in which integrity is sacrificed to try and ‘fit’ work into the latest style for the sake of competition is another thing entirely.

The openness of Fluxus networks and participation means this sort of competition is almost non-existent and the artist is free to submit whatever artwork is deemed appropriate for the event.

Ego

Competition leads us to the consideration of ego and egotism which, as mentioned previously, are linked to notions of prestige, recognition, status, reputation, importance and influence.

While some artists have resisted the values of today's artworld, others have embraced them, riding the ever-popular and ever-increasing tide of celebrity culture. The influence of these artists has given rise to even more 'fame junkies', not only among younger artists who aspire to be like their 'heroes', but also among collectors and curators who can invest a lot of time and effort in nurturing 'new talent' in order to exert power and exude cultural prestige. An example is Damien Hirst who, nurtured by Charles Saatchi, reached a position of such wealth and influence that he could produce *For the Love of God* 2007 (a human skull embossed with diamonds and platinum). Ironically, Hirst was then able to bypass the gallery system when selling this work (Preziosi & Farago 2012, p. 2). Yet this form of bypass was still within a system of capitalism.

The longstanding European belief that the artist is the primary agent or cause of the artwork is a notion that continues to this day. Influenced by Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'hollow', the idea of the artist being 'special' is, to me, problematic (hence adopting the anonymous pseudonym PringaDa, the 'author' of the works). As pointed out in this project, everything comes from somewhere and can lead anywhere. The role of the individual in this milieu is not something I see as particularly significant.

The practice of Zen Buddhism diminishes ego, and Zen Buddhism informs the Fluxus attitude. As articulated by Yoko Ono:

I'm bored with artists who make big lumps of sculpture and occupy a big space with them and think they have done something creative and allow people nothing but to applaud the lump. That is sheer narcissism.

(Yoko Ono 1971)

Ben Vautier is particularly cognisant of the 'ego problem'. He points to how ego may limit the growth of art:



Figure 14: Ben Vautier, *To Change Art Destroy Ego*, 1965, banners placed in various locations

Another example of how some artists have attempted to subvert egotism in the artworld is the Luther Blissett project:

In 1994, hundreds of European artists, activists and pranksters adopted and shared the same identity. They all called themselves Luther Blissett and set to raising hell in the cultural industry.

(Luther Blissett, n.d.)

Luther Blissett was only a five-year plan which was due to end in 1999, but Luther Blissetts still emerge today on social media platforms such as Facebook.

The Fluxus attitude circumvents the elitist nature of museum and gallery systems and the traditional equation of art with rarity, the artist as special. A Fluxus-like or Zen-like approach diminishes ego and offers a more holistic worldview, a more relaxed way of being, of working, that does not subscribe to serious competition.

In terms of negotiating artworld systems in relation to this project, maintaining the integrity of the Fluxus attitude is important when sharing works. I have therefore engaged primarily with Fluxus-associated events and exhibitions (Appendix 2). The only other exhibition venues in which the project's works have been shown are at an artist-run-initiative and in a post-graduate exhibition in a university gallery. Most of the works are videos, and my preferred practice is to share these openly via the internet, by as ordinary and ubiquitous a means as possible: YouTube. Sharing works in such an everyday understated way, resisting engagement with more conventional means, poses a conundrum of sorts in terms of the works'

communication. However, I have come to recognise that the slowness and almost invisibility of this choice is in itself part of the Zen-like and Fluxus attitude of this project.

fluxus and the then and now moments

It is well documented that Fluxus has had a significant influence on art practices from the 1960s to the present day. Foster et al. (2004), for instance, state that early Fluxus 'initiated many key aspects of Conceptual art, such as the insistence on viewer participation, the turn toward the linguistic performative, and the beginnings of institutional critique (Foster et al. 2004, p. 456). It could be said, then, that Fluxus paved the way for many modes of expression in contemporary art, and, as many of these appear within the systems of today's artworld, Fluxus still has potency today.

In this section I will draw on selected examples in order to differentiate between works made with the attitude of Fluxus and contemporary works that seem that appear Fluxus-like but which do not necessarily exhibit the Fluxus attitude.

Exhibitions and events such as the Walker Art Center's *In the Spirit of Fluxus* (1993), the Tate Modern's *Fluxus Weekend* (2008) and Yoko Ono's *War is Over! (if you want it)* (2013–2014) have led to a resurgence of interest in Fluxus over recent years. It seems that Fluxus is having a 'cultural moment'. And yet misunderstandings as to what Fluxus actually 'is' seem to remain. For instance, about a contemporary artwork, sometimes one might hear someone say something like 'Oh, that's very Fluxus'. But this exposes, more often than not, a misunderstanding of what it means to be 'Fluxus'. As mentioned in other parts of this exegesis, Fluxus is more than an art movement or a style of expression, it is an attitude that continues to this day.

A Zen-like sense of humility and unpretentiousness are both part of the Fluxus attitude. Working with the attitude of Fluxus means that you need to be able (like the early Fluxus symbol) to stick out your tongue and blow a very large raspberry at the systems of today's artworld, with humour of course. The Fluxus attitude laughs at egotism, narcissism and the desire to become a famous artist. It also encourages the ability to laugh at oneself.

This ability to use humour, self deprecation and understated methods is evident in the work of contemporary artist Anastasia Klose. For instance she utilises low-tech methods (e.g. using

iMovie software) and materials such as cardboard signs as part of her articulation of an 'aesthetic of the pathetic' (Wakeling 2008). Recently she took aim at the artworld by selling 'mock knock-off garments carrying slogans subverting the names of well-known artists' (Cuthbertson 2014) at the Art Basel art fair in Hong Kong. I have been unable to discover whether Klose cites Fluxus as an influence, but her apparent humility (NEW07 Interviewed 2007; Art Nation 2011), other aspects of her attitude, her choice of materials and the simple technology with which she undertakes her practice all appear to stem from Fluxus and reflect the Fluxus attitude.



Figure 15: Anastasia Klose, *Nanna I'm Still Searching*, 2011 (video still)
[performance was part of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art's Pop Up Program during the Vernissage of the 54th Venice Biennale]

Klose's attitude and methods contrast with those of artists who do not have this attitude and yet draw on Fluxus for inspiration and expression. For instance, in response to the recent resurgence of interest in Fluxus, some artists might be tempted to use Fluxus-like expressions merely to spice up their work in a bid to satisfy hungry career curators who might be keen to promote their own career by including 'trending' art in their exhibitions/events. In that case it would be postmodernist appropriation, not Fluxus. Fluxus is not a condiment. It is a way of life, a way of doing things (Higgins 2002). Therefore, if an artist is 'playing the game' by the artworld's rules, if the name of the game is fame (with more emphasis on the artist's name being seen rather than the artwork communicating an idea), then it is not a Fluxus game.

The following works, which are offered for comparative purposes, are those where artists have chosen to live in a gallery for a period of time: Ben Vautier's *Living Sculpture* (1962),

Joseph Beuys's *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974) and Tracey Emin's 1996 gallery live-in performance (documented in *Untitled* (2000)). Vautier's installation/performance was created as part of a group exhibition for the *Festival of Misfits* in London:

Ben moved into the small display window of London's Gallery One and lived there for 15 days, putting himself on display as an aesthetic object and offering himself for sale for £250. In his trademark cursive handwriting, Vautier labelled objects in the room with rhetorical questions or whimsical comments, giving equal importance to everything from the kitchen table to a container of dirty water.

(Walker Art Center, n.d.)



Figure 16: Ben Vautier performing his *Living Sculpture* at *Festival of Misfits*, London, 1962

In 1993 Vautier recreated this work, re-titling it *Ben's Window* for the major Fluxus exhibition *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, organised by the Walker Art Center (2005). *Living Sculpture* (1962) effectively subverts the elitism of the artworld, something that has been reinforced time and time again over the years by Vautier repeatedly signing his name on everything, the relentless repetition of which lays bare the ego and its pretensions. Through 'playing with and confusing the very slight difference which the French language sets up between *du nouveau* (the new) and *de nouveau* (once again)' (Blom 1998, p. 85), he subverts traditional notions that the artwork is unique and that the artist is 'special'.

Another live-in installation/performance was carried out by Joseph Beuys when he lived with a coyote in a New York gallery for seven days. The work was called *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974). Unlike Vautier, whose performance sought to subvert the elitism of the art gallery and artworld systems, Beuys's performance was primarily about connecting with America's nature only through the coyote and his own role as a shaman or shepherd-like figure.

Subsequently, in 1996, Tracey Emin lived for 14 days in a locked room within a gallery, in the company of only empty canvasses and art materials. 'Peepholes' in the walls allowed the audience to watch a naked Emin shake off her 'painting demons' by 'making images like the artists she really admired (i.e. Egon Schiele, Edvard Munch, Yves Klein)' (Saatchi Gallery n.d.b).



Figure 17: Tracey Emin, *Untitled*, 2000, photographic print, 104 x 130cm

Although all of these works involved living in a gallery, they are each different. Ben Vautier's *Living Sculpture* was an active subversion of the artworld, and for his entire life he has 'sent up' narcissistic solipsism. Beuys's performance re-stated his interest in the natural world and his self-appointed role as leader within it, and Emin's more recent voyeuristic 'art therapy' session is an expression of her vulnerability and ongoing investigation into personal angst. Her apparent desperation and 'wannabe' attitude (wanting to be like her heroes) displayed in this live-in performance articulates today's 'celebrity culture' (and reminds us of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*). The Saatchi Gallery (n.d.b) says that through 'her honest retelling of unique and intimate life events Emin establishes a generous dialogue between the viewer and the artist' (Saatchi Gallery n.d.c). But who is speaking and who is listening, what is the conversation about and why? Like reading *Hello* magazine, too much focus on the famous can impoverish the lives of 'ordinary' people, rendering them less capable of discovering meaning (and art) in their own life. We are led into a cul-de-sac lined with mirrors. We are left with nowhere else to go.

The Fluxus attitude leads us into a more open field of possibilities. It asserts that 'everyone should have the ability to participate in the constant definition and redefinition of what is see-able and what is sayable, in what can be thought and what can be done. It is an assertion that every person has the potential to become a speaking subject...' (Proctor cited in Baas 2011, p. 31). Rather than remain in the shadows of the famous, following their path, the Fluxus attitude operates in the cracks of established roads. It understands these routes but undermines them in order to encourage a more exploratory journey for all.

The next examples chosen for comparison are a George Brecht score and Martin Creed's *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off* (2001) which in some sense may be thought to be speaking of the absence of art, yet in another sense it is an art that is embedded. Creed won the Turner Prize for this work in 2001. This work took the form-non-form of an empty room of the gallery which was brightly lit for five seconds, followed by it being totally dark for five seconds, which was repeated ad infinitum. In an online summary of this work, we are told 'Creed creates a new and unexpected effect' (Tate n.d.b). But how new is this?

In 1961, George Brecht had penned the following event score:

Three Lamp Events

on. off.

lamp.

off. on.

(George Brecht 1961)

Such a relationship between the two works is not surprising. There has been a surge of recent interest in Brecht's contribution to the development of conceptual art, and it is possible that Creed was exposed to this. Writing in the *Journal of Visual Culture*, Gascia Ouzounian notes this interest has been documented by a number of scholars including Blom (1998), Doris (1998), Fischer (2005), Friedman (1998), Hendricks (2003), Higgins (1998, 2002), Joseph (2007), Kaprow (1993), Kim-Cohen (2009), Kotz (2001, 2005, 2007), Martin (1978), Smith (1998) and Robinson (2002, 2005, 2009) (Ouzounian 2011, p. 202).

Coincidental or otherwise, Creed's work seems to indicate a 'seepage' of the Fluxus idea into the present. So is it 'Fluxus'? Creed's *Work No. 227* is empty (formless), theatrical (as were many early Fluxus performances) and simple. All of these relate in some way to Fluxus. However, when the work takes place inside the gallery, it could be argued, and when the trajectory of the artist's career is primarily within the art establishment, this renders it un-Fluxus. As stated previously, my preference is to share works outside the gallery system, and this is what differentiates Creed's work from that undertaken in this research.

Creed's apparent failure to conduct an institutional critique in his practice is in contrast to the work of Francis Alÿs, whose work, although shown in galleries, has its 'life and breath' outside the gallery, and could in general be thought of as having more in common with the Fluxus attitude. Video footage is most often the means by which Alÿs's works are shared, serving as a remainder of both large-scale projects and his more intimate, personal yet socio-political actions. Alÿs is not afraid to discomfort the comfortable. For example, the video documentation of his action *Railings* (2004) in its playfully serious execution seems like an intermedial children's game as he walked the streets of London running a drumstick along the railings of different properties, capturing their rhythms. This can be seen as disturbing the

limits, the boundaries, between the public and the private. In a book on Alÿs's work, the subheading to the description of this work reads like a Fluxus event score:

Railings: Upon arriving in (a new city), pick up a stick, run it along the architecture and listen to the music of the city.

(Godfrey, Biesenbach & Greenberg 2004)

Whether this Fluxus-type reference is intentional or not, I intend to perform this score one day.

The ongoing flux of Fluxus scores, therefore, can be seen in contemporary art today. Perhaps a more obvious example than those cited above is Hans Ulrich Obrist's worldwide *do it* project which spans from 1993 until the present, initiated and curated by a curator primarily, I would suggest, for curators. In its first iteration 12 artists were invited to write scores which were translated into different languages, printed in a book and circulated internationally. Since then the project has grown to include '*do it (museum)*, *do it (home)*, *do it (TV)*, *do it (seminar)*, *do it (outside)*, *do it (party)*, as well as some anti-do its, a philosophy *do it* and most recently a UNESCO children's *do it*' (Obrist n.d.). Its aim is to discover 'how exhibition formats could be rendered more flexible and open-ended' (Obrist n.d.). Although Obrist acknowledges the legacy of the Fluxus event score, the outcome is usually an exhibition or outdoor event, which limits the scores' applicability. While in many respects this may be seen as Fluxus-like, I would question whether the role of the gallery and such extreme curatorial intervention is in fact a continuation of the Fluxus attitude. It is organised and mediated through the art establishment that Fluxus has always sought to subvert. These inherent limitations set Obrist's *do it* apart from what is proposed in this research. This project seeks to put control/power back into the hands of individuals in their everyday environment, including experiences of the everyday random phenomena that emerge in those environments which, I suggest, may be considered art.

It should also be mentioned that while the Fluxus attitude can appear to be compromised by sometimes positioning Fluxus exhibitions within the gallery, rather than being organised by a 'career curator', it seems that these events are usually organised by a Fluxus artist who acts in the role of curator. An example is the Fluxus component of the *Write Now: Artists and Letterforms* exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Center in 2011–2012. When setting up this exhibition the curator (or someone) took up the invitation to 'play' with *FluxMusic* (2011), a work from this project. Later documentation during the time of this exhibition revealed that

other people had also 'played'. This is discussed in Part 5, and exemplifies the informal approach of the Fluxus attitude in the context of exhibitions.

Obrist's *do it* project also seems to have some overlap with the realm of relational aesthetics as '[e]ach *do it* exhibition is uniquely site-specific because it engages the local community in a dialogue that responds to and adds a new set of instructions' (Obrist n.d.).

Relational aesthetics is an ever-increasing present-day trend in art practices, the term having been coined by French curator Nicolas Bourriaud in 1998 in his attempt to characterise artists' concerns that were evident in the 1990s. These were practices that were inspired by (or exploited) the intersubjective encounters between people in their social context. Bourriaud proposed that art was the information exchanged between the viewers/participants and the artist.

Among the artists proffered/preferred by Bourriaud as exemplary of relational aesthetics is Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose work 'is fundamentally about bringing people together' according to Rochelle Steiner, curator of Tiravanija's solo exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery, London in 2005. The Serpentine Gallery website (n.d.) says 'Tiravanija created situations in which the divisions between art and life were removed'. But my question is, were they? For whom? For the gallery-goers? Or for everyone? Tiravanija's food is free, but a gift is complex. What if a homeless person visited the gallery every day, asking to be fed? Would that person be welcome?

Claire Bishop, in the revised version of her article that first appeared in *October* magazine, says that Bourriaud claims to divorce the contemporary work of the artists he champions from that of their predecessors (Bishop 2010, p. 258). And yet Tiravanija's performances of cooking for his audience bear a strong resemblance to Alison Knowles's score *#2-Proposition: Make a Salad* (1962) that she performed first in 1962 at the ICA in London and more recently at the Tate Modern in 2008 as part of a Fluxus Weekend.



Figure 18: Alison Knowles performing her score #2-*Proposition: Make a Salad* in 1962, London

Knowles's score is intended as an action that can be carried out by anyone, and the brevity of the proposition leaves room for many interpretations. Unlike *Tiravanija*, it is not necessary for Knowles to be present for the work to take place. Unlike the staged performances of *Tiravanija*, it is not necessary for the audience to be present at a particular place and time, eating the food that is presented (Bishop 2010). It is not even necessary to have an audience. You can just do it yourself.

In 2012 I wrote a score that was inspired both by Knowles's *Make a Salad* and John Cage, called *Homage to John Cage #1* (see Part 5). Although this work is more specific than Knowles's score, it can also be performed by anyone at anytime, anywhere. Also in honour of John Cage, I performed another score by Alison Knowles called *Variation #1 on Proposition: Make a soup* (1964). As Cage was a keen mycologist, I made a mushroom soup (documented in the 'journal' for this project).

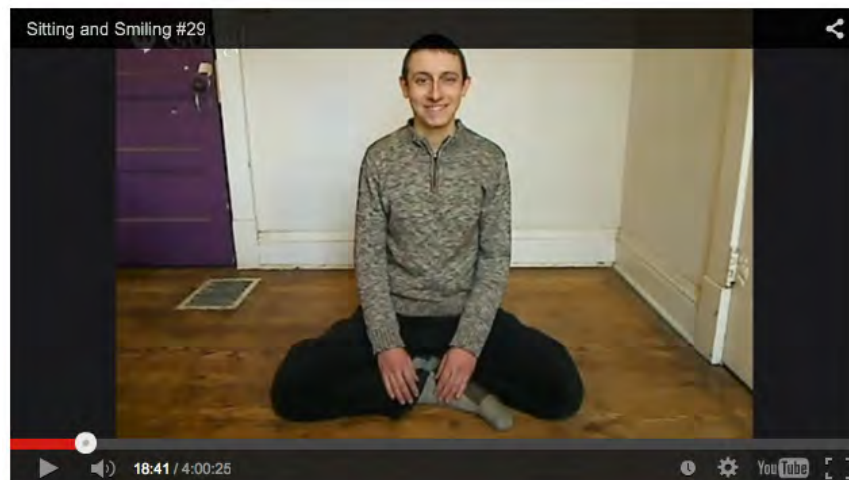
Fluxus scores can act as metaphors that encourage people to think and perhaps take other forms of action. Knowles says of her score, 'We know that if we could get this world together there would be enough salad to feed everyone and that's the metaphor' (Knowles 2008). Where is such encouragement to found when sharing one of *Tiravanija*'s curries? Bourriaud claims that artists such as *Tiravanija* represent social change, democracy in action. But my question is, what is democratic about having to visit a gallery or go to an organised event for this experience? As Bishop asks, 'what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?' (Bishop 2010, p. 263). She also indicates that the 'feel-good position' adopted by artists such as *Tiravanija* is:

...reflected in their ubiquitous presence on the international arts scene, and their status as perennial favourites of a few curators who have become known for promoting their preferred selection of artists (and thereby becoming touring stars in their own right). In such a cosy situation, art...collapses into compensatory (and self-congratulatory) entertainment.

(Bishop 2010, p. 274)

One is reminded once again of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*. Rather than feeding an ever-hungry artworld fuelled by capitalism, my preference, as implied by the title of Yoko Ono's book of scores, *Acorn* (2013), is to plant seeds of change in people's minds, even if they are, like the oak tree, very slow growing. Fluxus has always known that there is art outside the constraints of the gallery system. It is just a case of having a certain attitude and, as suggested by the 'matterings' works, tuning in. Fluxus as an attitude has not only survived but grown over the past 50 plus years. It is not going away, it is going anywhere and everywhere.

Perhaps in the meantime, just as contemporary artist Benjamin Bennett's project of endurance seems to suggest, all we can do is sit in a Zen-like fashion and smile:



Benjamin Bennett smiling, captured still from livestream video, 3 February 2015

[Benjamin Bennett is the son of longtime 'Fluxers' John M. Bennett and Catherine Mehrl Bennett. His livestream videos record him sitting like this for four hours a day]

DOING [...] (NOTHING)

an approach to practice

This part of the exegesis outlines my approach to practice and how ‘doing nothing’ is an integral part of both attitude and process. ‘Doing nothing’ may be seen as a boundless ‘moment of hesitation’ during which consciousness can quietly, but without undue attention, anticipate the emergence of possibilities.

This ambiguous state of liminality relates not only to the playfulness in the works themselves, but also to my acknowledgment of the autonomy of the works. This is the reason they have been ascribed the anonymous ‘authorship’ of PringaDa.

The works are not a static form of art, therefore I often refer to the results of ‘nothing doing’ play as ‘soundings’ (the score-works) and ‘matterings’ (the video works that simply capture a moment).

nothing doing and doing nothing

We have reached the epoch of the nanosecond. This is the heyday of speed. If one quality defines our modern, technocratic age, it is acceleration. We are making haste. Our computers, our movies, our sex lives, our prayers—they all run faster now than ever before. And the more we fill our lives with time-saving devices and time-saving strategies, the more rushed we feel.

(Gleick, n.d.)

The pressures of time in our time can be overwhelming: speed permeates almost every aspect of Western society. We are pushed and pulled by speed, and our mental and physical agility and ability to cope with the resultant stress are frequently insufficient and ineffective.

“There’s nothing [interesting] here!” cries the voice of boredom. Are we afraid of ‘nothing doing’?

I find ‘nothing’ an interesting concept. What is nothing? Is there such a thing as nothing? And what is the activity of doing nothing? What happens if you adopt ‘doing nothing’ as a process, as a sort of art-antithesis to society’s acceleration? A process that, as I will discuss later in this exegesis, is available to all. And an art that is available to all. At any time.

The activity of ‘doing nothing’ seems to be rare in Western societies today. Many people are averse to what they see as ‘boredom’, constantly seeking entertainment and frequently becoming passive recipients of that entertainment. Yet recent research (Mann & Cadman 2014) has shown that being bored may lead to increased creativity, and that an important factor in this is the chance to daydream. The results from Mann and Cadman’s study is highly relevant for this project, in particular the ‘matterings’ works: it suggests a slowing down would be beneficial, a way of being and thinking that could provide an antidote to the speed and pressures of life today. In addition, the recent project *Bored and Brilliant* was a week of challenges/instructions to encourage people to use their smartphone less and ‘spend more time thinking creatively’ (New Tech City 2015a). One of the apps used in the project is called *Moment*, which allows people to measure their smartphone usage (NPR 2015). Apparently ‘over 18,000 people signed up for a project designed to rediscover quiet, reflective time undisturbed by the constant flash of gadgets’ (New Tech City 2015b).

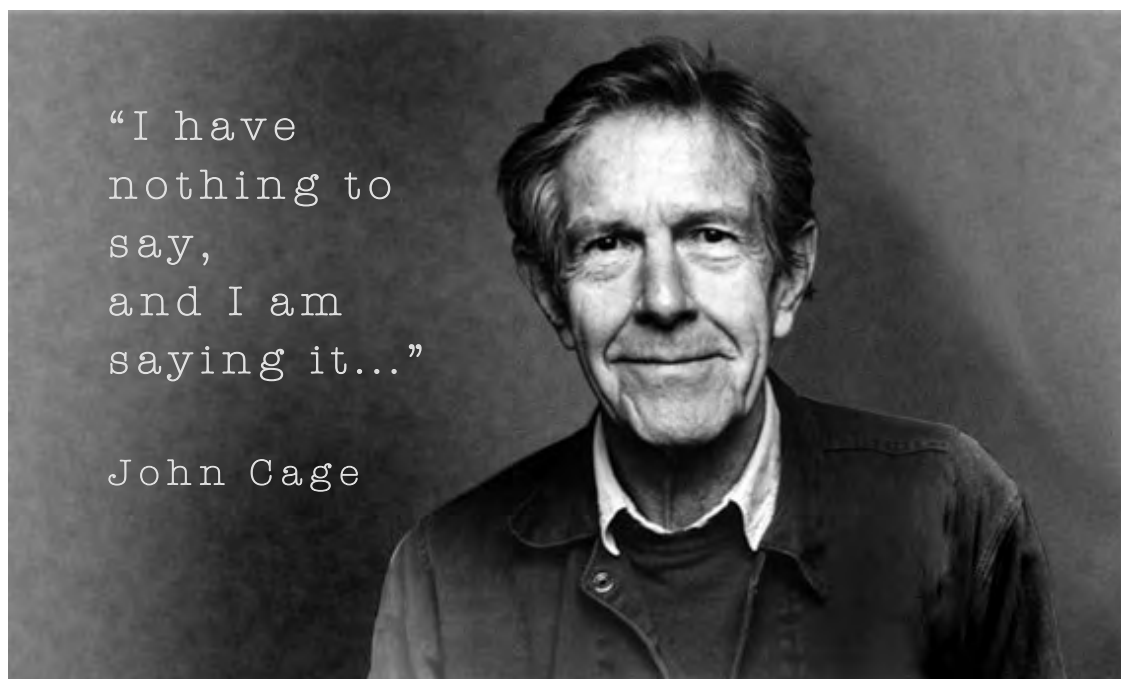


Figure 20: John Cage quote from ‘Lecture on Nothing’ in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* 1961, p. 109

Over 60 years ago John Cage's most famous work, *4'33"*, was performed for the first time.

According to James Pritchett (2009) what made this performance 'so compelling' was:

...the utter simplicity of the concept. The composer creates nothing at all. The performer goes on stage and does nothing.

(Pritchett 2009)

John Cage demonstrated that silence is impossible and can be music. He had studied with D.T. Suzuki and learned from Zen, and then he learned from life:

Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating. [...] We want to capture and control these sounds, to use them not as sound effects but as musical instruments.

(Cage 1961, p.3)

This concept became my sounding board: I adapted and applied it to art making, bouncing from within the 'fine art' paradigm until the word 'art' itself, for me, changed from a noun into a verb. This notion will be explained further in the final chapter of this exegesis.

And so my way of working, in the initial stages of the process, is to do nothing. But because doing nothing is impossible I am in fact doing something.

What this means is that each day, for me, is a boundless 'moment of hesitation', and with a quiet anticipation my consciousness is open to the potential emergence of possibilities. I maintain a kind of 'unintentional attendance', that is, I 'attend' without intending.

This relaxed state of awareness is reminiscent of the *wu-nien* of Zen, which 'is the Chinese way of describing the realization of Emptiness (*sunyata*)' (Larson 2012, p. 218).

Cultivating the mind of wu-nien is to see all things as they are [...] it is to be present in all places and yet not to become attached anywhere...

(Larson 2012, p. 218)

It is also related the ideation of Merleau-Ponty:

"letting be": the melody sings itself within us much more than we sing it.

(Carbone 2004, p. xv)

In this state, a sort of attunement takes place between physical, physiological and psychological phenomena within the flux of everyday life. It is within this eructation and

entanglement that interconnections and meaning can randomly emerge and something, somewhere is energised until something forms into matter. That is to say, passivity and activity are coupled (Merleau-Ponty 1961), absorbed one into the other and entangled within the process.

It is what may be referred to as a liminal state. The term 'liminality' has been used in many disciplines including cultural theory, anthropology and sociology. What is generally agreed is that it is an ambiguous state:

...in medical anthropology, liminality entails "an ambiguous status, or the transition phase of a rite of passage during which an individual is outside conventional roles", whereas the general definition describes liminality as a period of transition where normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behavior are relaxed, or a situation which can lead to new perspectives.

(Janzen 2002, p. 137)

Liminality is alluded to by David Doris who says that Fluxus scores 'establish a shifting zone of impermanence, a *nomadism* in which the self is continually redefined in accord with the external force...that is now asserting its momentary demands, and with which it now interacts' (Doris 1998, p. 125).

Liminality is also connected to the playfulness inherent in most Fluxus works, events, performances. 'Liminality is full of potency and potentiality' say Benamou and Caramello (1977, p. 33), '...it may also be full of experiment and play...In it, play is the thing'. This liminal state can lead to a play of ideas, play of words, a play of metaphors, a play of experimentation.

This ambiguous state of liminality relates not only to the playfulness in the works themselves, but also to my acknowledgement of the autonomy of the works (drawing on Merleau-Ponty's 'hollow of being') by ascribing the anonymous 'authorship' of PringaDa (a name that was an emergent phenomenon) as described in the next section.

autonomy and anonymity

To me, it is as if the results of this process, the 'artworks', are autonomous, having been formed in the 'hollow of being', a term used by Merleau-Ponty. In a working note of *The Visible and the Invisible*, he states:

...new as our initiatives may be, they come to birth at the heart of being, they are connected onto the time that streams forth in us, supported on the pivots or hinges of our life, their *sense* is a “direction” [...] a *field* has been opened in which *something* or the *absence* of something is always inscribed. This is not an activity of the soul [...] I am not even the author of that *hollow* that forms within me by the passage from the present to the retention, it is not I who makes myself think any more than it is I who makes my heart beat.’

(Merleau-Ponty 1961, p. 221, italics are in the original)

and:

When we invent a melody, the melody sings itself within us much more than we sing it: it goes down the throat of the singer, as Proust says...[T]he body is suspended in what it sings, the melody incarnates itself and finds in the body a type of servant.

(Merleau-Ponty *N* 228/173-174 in Carbone 2004, p. xv)

It should be noted that in this process, the body/hollow ‘is not a mere *receptacle* of the idea, but rather is essentially united with, is *one and the same as*, the idea’s advent’ (Carbone 2004, p. xv).

In this project, I have tried to acknowledge the works’ autonomy by ascribing the name ‘PringaDa’ as the ‘author’ rather than my own name. The word ‘PringaDa’ was itself an emergent phenomenon, having been a word that popped into head many years ago whenever I saw something different or exciting: “PRrrrrrINGgaDa!” I would exclaim. I have no idea where the word came from, where I had heard it, but it seemed a suitable name with which to ‘author’ the works resulting from the emergent phenomena of this process. I later discovered that, in Spanish, ‘pringada’ is bread in gravy. As my approach to practice is so influenced by Fluxus, I believed this humorous discovery made the name even more appropriate.

Over time, internet search bots have made connections between my personal name and PringaDa. This is of little concern, however, as my intent is to minimise the ego/self rather than hide completely, and to acknowledge the autonomy of the works.

I’m not interested in myself, in my work being communication from me to a listener. I write it to be from the sounds themselves, to the listener, so that I make a music for which I am not so much the composer as the listener too.

John Cage
(*In the Ocean* 2002)

All forms of art may be considered signifiers (after Ferdinand de Saussure, who defined a sign as being composed of a ‘signifier’—the form which the sign takes, and the ‘signified’—the

concept it represents) and, for many producers and consumers of art, endurance is significant. However, the results of the experiential–experimental processes of this project are not intended to endure. For the most part, they are ephemeral formless pointers to awareness and ‘engagement’. Raul Moncayo describes awareness as an entanglement through which we are capable of experience, ‘a subjective faculty that differs from fantasies/impulses or the prejudices of the ego-Cs. [sic] [...] when awareness turns toward the subject or the object, the subject and the object arise together as intrinsic aspects of language and logic that are co-extensive with the material organisation of natural phenomena’ (Moncayo 2012, p. 195).

In acknowledgement of this differing role most of the results of ‘nothing doing’ play, I often refer to the score-works as ‘soundings’ and the video works, that is, those that are simply the captured remainder of a moment, ‘matterings’. There are additional video works that record a performance, and these are not ‘matterings’ in quite the same way. While the performances may have been prompted by an emergent phenomenon similarly to the ‘matterings’ recordings, beyond that they are not a ‘mattering’, merely the recorded remainder of the performance. Therefore not all results from the project fit neatly into these two categories.

soundings (the score works)

While the ‘matterings’ are recordings of an emergence and its momentary associations, the soundings may be said to carry more intent. Like the ‘matterings’, the ‘soundings’ commence with emergence but they are then moulded during their sojourn in the ‘hollow’ into the shapes and nuances and meanings of words that could prompt a range of interpretations/performances by others.

They are ‘soundings’, both in their formation and their journey. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes ‘sounding’ as ‘a vocal utterance or pronunciation; resonant or sonorous quality of this’.

As each ‘sounding’ departs the hollow and travels to other hollows to garner new interpretations and expressions, the sounding process becomes ‘sonar-ous’ as well as sonorous. Sonar is a method or device that uses sound waves to detect and locate objects, especially underwater (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*). It can also be used to gauge properties

of the atmosphere, to try and find out quietly ‘how matters stand’, or examine with a sound or probe (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

With regard to the ‘soundings’ score-works, as with conventional sonar, waves are emitted. However, in the case of these soundings, there is no expectation to achieve an echo, result or answer. Like complex systems and phenomenological research, the soundings remain open-ended, that is, open not ended. Their reverberations frequently remain unknown. Measuring does not matter: like much of the work, it is immaterial.

matterings (video works that capture a moment)

The video works that capture a moment (an extended moment) are simply a recording of ‘matterings’ that came into matter and mattered (to me) in that mo[....]ment and yet (the results) (to me) do not matter. The moment has passed.

What remains in the formless form of the video works is merely a trace, a signifier of a moment that presented to my consciousness some sort of ephemeral phenomenon to which I may or may not have attributed meaning and which may or may not have meaning for others.

This word, ‘matterings’, is after Barad:

‘...all bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity, its performativity. Boundaries, properties, and meaning are differentially enacted through the intra-activity of mattering. [...] Ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are part, including new configurations, new subjectivities, new possibilities. Even the smallest cuts matter.’

(Barad in Dolphijn & Van der Tuin 2012, p. 69.)

For each and every one of us, every day the field of possibilities (Merleau-Ponty) is open and pregnant with the potential for emergent phenomena through which possibilities for meaning present themselves to consciousness. The chance to engage, translate and record these possibilities, however, is not always present. Sometimes the moment passes too quickly, sometimes the physical capacity to record is not present. Within the context of this project, therefore, it is only sometimes, out of many times, that I have been able to record these moments. Examples appear in Part 5 of this exegesis.

journalling nothingness

Much of the 'journalling' for this project sits outside the convention of keeping an artist's journal or diary or working drawings. Instead, the 'journalling' processes were random responses to chance, to emergent phenomena, and often took either the form of scribbled sticky notes or the formless form of video experimentation. From time to time my kitchen blackboard came into play. Intermingled with shopping lists and other reminders to attend to the necessities of everyday life were notes about ideas, interests, emergent phenomena and the potential for participation in overseas Fluxus projects and events:

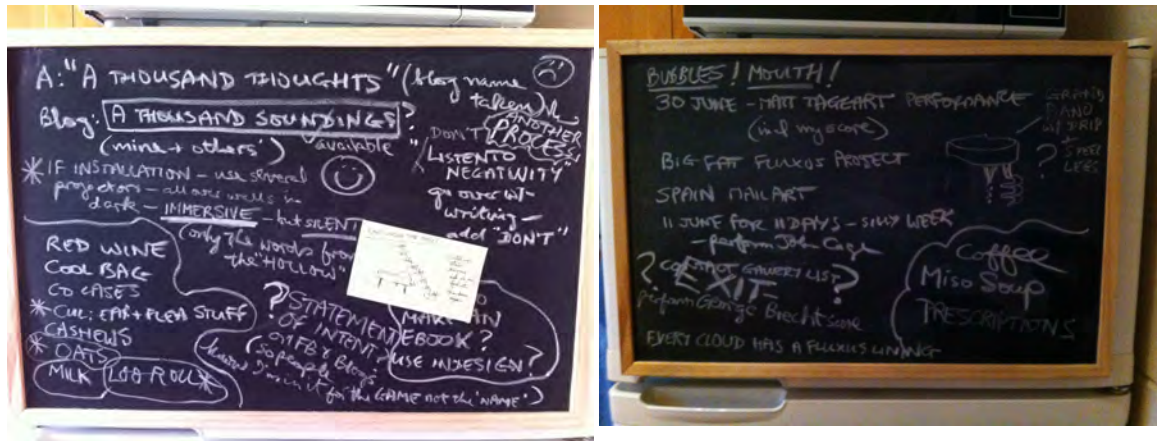


Figure 21: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), examples of blackboard 'journalling'

This use of a blackboard may at first seem to resonate with works such as Alejandro Guijarro's ongoing blackboard series, some of which have been exhibited under the title *Momentum* 2010–2013:



Figure 22: Alejandro Guijarro, *Momentum* 2010–2013

Unlike the works in this project, or indeed my blackboard 'journal', Guijarro's 'blackboards' are photographs, works of art that are exhibited in a gallery. They are life-size facsimiles of blackboards that are to be found in academic institutions worldwide, specifically those that specialise in quantum mechanics.

However, there are echoes of the themes of this research, for in one of his statements Guijarro says: 'Each image records the physical traces of a mental movement, the speed, repetition and emphasis of individual strokes suggesting a particular train of thought or area of questioning. Yet each blackboard is a token of something lost; every photograph records something subsequently erased or smudged into nothing, acting like the mind itself when attempting to absorb the complex, the inexpressible' (Saatchi Gallery n.d.).

Fluxus artist Ben Vautier's handwritten white text on black is also reminiscent of a blackboard:

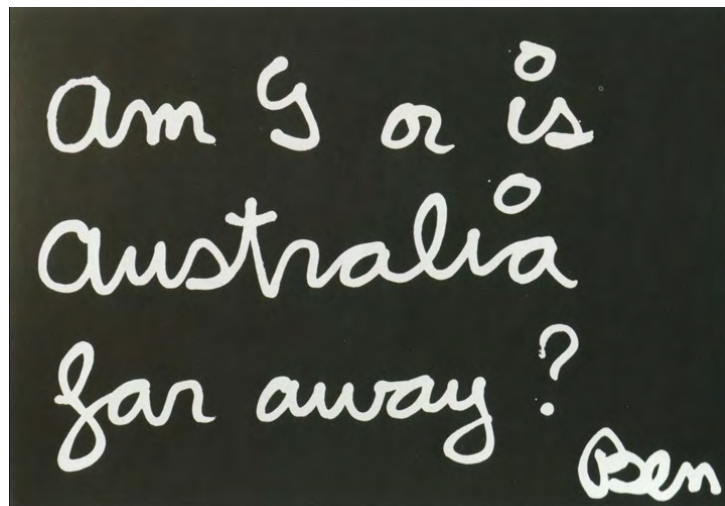


Figure 23: Ben Vautier, *Am I or is Australia far away?*, 1990, screenprint, 70 x 100 cm

Whereas Ben Vautier's work is, in general, a direct rebuttal of the values of the 'art establishment' (in Situationist terms, a *détournement*) and Guijarro's blackboard photographs are situated in many respects within that artworld, my blackboard is only a transitory and transient means of process.

part 5

[NOTHING] WORKS

much doing about nothing

As indicated in Part 4 of this exegesis, the results of ‘nothing doing’ play may be loosely divided into two types, named ‘matterings’ (the video works) and ‘soundings’ (the score works). However, not all results from the project fit neatly into these two categories.

Sometimes they are more complex.

The participatory project *The This Project*, for instance, invites others to contribute a word which, when appended by the word ‘this’, then becomes the score. The score is subsequently performed (and perhaps) recorded by anyone who chooses to participate.

There are also video recordings of performances, for example, that may have been prompted by an emergent phenomenon similarly to the ‘matterings’ recordings, but beyond that they are not a ‘mattering’, merely the recorded remainder of the performance.

To reflect the playful approach to practice in this project and its relationship to random emergent phenomena (‘sometimes’), this part of the exegesis is divided into the following sections:

- Sometimes I make games for others to play with
- Sometimes I just play
- Sometimes I write scores
- Sometimes I perform scores by others
- But mostly I just record moments

sometimes I make games for others to play with

One of the early experimental explorations in this project is *The This Project*. The inspiration for this participatory project came from the Boston-based iKatun group whose members collaborate with each other and anyone anywhere through projects that often invite people to submit information or instructions which the group then acts out. They operate under the Institute for Infinitely Small Things, the website for which documents some of these projects (Infinitely Small Things n.d.).

The particular example that sparked *The This Project* is a project by kanarinka (*aka* Catherine D'Ignazio), an iKatun founding member, called *public alley 818* (December 2003 to February 2004). In her statement for the alleyway project she says she is interested in invisible things, and that these 'are not just alleys and abandoned buildings. They are assumptions, whole frameworks and contexts, the myriad perceptions discarded, the parts of our environment that we do not see because of expectation' (kanarinka 2004). She posted an open invitation, via a website, for people to submit instructions for activities that she could carry out in the alleyway behind her home. It should be noted that in relation to her work, kanarinka also cites Yoko Ono, John Cage and Fluxus as influences (kanarinka n.d.).

Also interested in the invisible, or what different phenomena mean to different people, I was inspired by this approach, this alleyway activity and this virtual space but had pressing questions about what and where and when 'this' could be and who would decide the 'this' and whether the 'this' could be more open.

And so, early in this project, *The This Project* emerged.

The ubiquitous yellow stickie (with all its potentiality and ephemerality) suggested itself as a good starting point. Having been employed for many years in various editing and administrative roles, the yellow stickie has long been part of my everyday life, reminding, demanding attention. *The This Project*, therefore, began with the score:

Put a yellow stickie anywhere, anytime.

I set up an online blog through which I invited people to contribute verbs that go with the word 'this'. This was an invitation for people to, in effect, write their own score and to play with any of the project scores, or even just to place their own yellow stickie somewhere and send in a photograph. The introductory text on the website reads:

You can join in by doing one or more of the following:

1. contribute a word (needs to go with 'this' after it) to be made to a yellow stickie.
2. if you want to perform the score yourself, just put a yellow stickie anywhere, anytime and send in a photo by email.
3. or you can order a pad of yellow stickies with your word on (or any other of the words). This will be printed and mailed to you free of charge in exchange for a photo or two of where you put them!
4. or I can perform the score for you. Just describe what you would like me to do.

I made the contributed words first into digital 'yellow stickies' that I added to the site, and I also had real pads of yellow stickies commercially printed so that myself or others could perform the score by putting them anywhere, anytime, documenting the process as we went and posting images of our placements to the blog.



Figure 24: Screenshot of *The This Project* blog
(www.thethisproject.blogspot.com)

Each individual stickie is stamped on the back with the blogspot address (stamping being an ongoing activity amongst the Fluxus community). The idea of this is to stimulate curiosity, a visit to the website and contributing a verb by those who may discover the placed stickies.

The stylised graphic quality of the text of each stickie, all of which were different, refers to some of the earlier Fluxus publications, such as this second page of a brochure by George Maciunas for *Fluxus Yearboxes* (Version 1) in 1962:

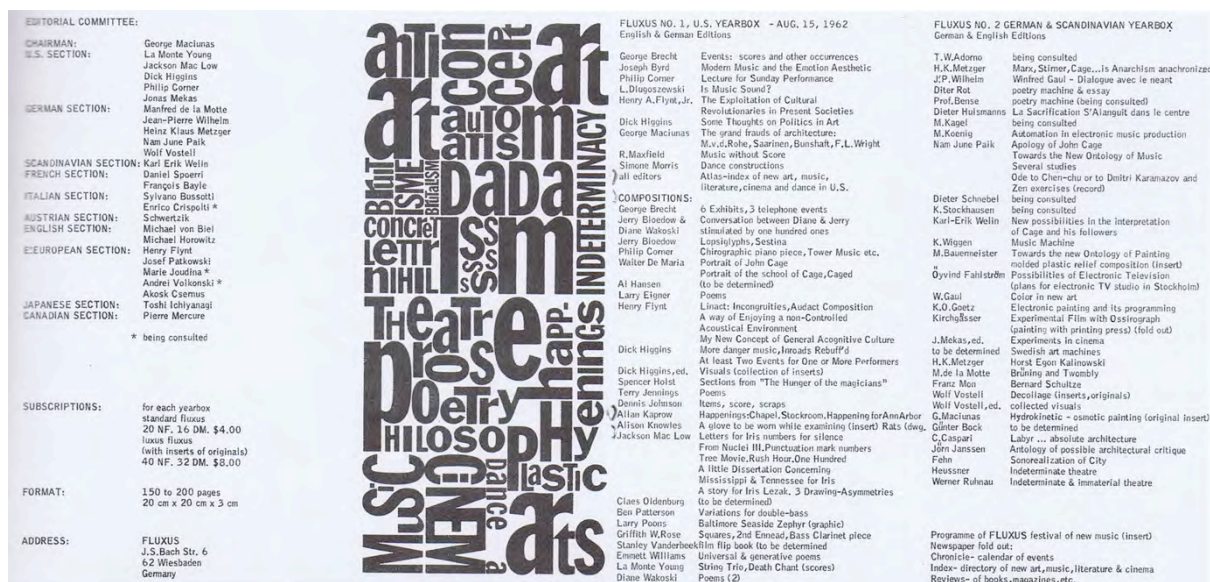


Figure 25: George Maciunas, second page of a two-page brochure/prospectus for *Fluxus Yearboxes*, Version 1, 1962.
Offset on paper, 8 x 17 opened. Collection Walker Art Center



Figure 26: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), Examples of yellow stickies from The This Project

In some ways this may be seen as a kind of *détournement* process that echoes Debord and Jorn's book *Mémoires*, where the writing also travels in various directions, although the intent of the stickies is less political.

The mental slippage that causes the eye to read the word 'shit' on the right-hand side of the second stickie above ('play with this') also connects rather randomly and amusingly to the scatological qualities mentioned by Bataille when speaking of *l'informe* (formlessness). It is an intellectual slippage of perception, the excremental qualities of which are a 'scandal of thought' (Bois & Krauss 1997, p. 246).

The temporary illegibility of the stylised text of the yellow stickies probes the space between graphic image and language. The word 'this' acts, in semiotic terms, as an index and, according to Rosalind Krauss:

The index, in naming the particular, the "this" ...is not so much generating a meaning as causing something to happen.

(Krauss 2010, pp. 168 & 172)

It belongs to the performative.

By positioning the hard-copy yellow stickies at sites of our choosing, those of us who place the stickies leave a trace of our having been there. Like graffiti, it's an act of violation and a signature, as well as being an invitation to others to question meaning or to play.

The 'sites of our choosing' also differentiates this participatory project from the site-specific events that have been championed by Nicolas Bourriaud in what he has termed relational aesthetics, as discussed in Part 3 of this exegesis. Instead of determining a specific locale to which people can come and participate, it opens up possibilities and imbues the project with complexity. In terms of Complexity Theory, *The This Project* represents a compositionally complex system.

This flexibility of the 'situation' is also something that is embraced by the participatory projects of Matthew Lee Knowles. He says of his first project of this type:

My first global event (*six_events*, 2008) had people doing things that an observer would not identify as 'performance art', in fact they probably wouldn't notice the person at all, life and art were effectively indistinguishable, audience boundaries were crossed and roles were questioned. This interest of mine really goes back to Cage's 4'33" composition – it's everywhere, it's happening right now.

(Knowles 2012b)

Since then, Knowles has initiated two further projects: *sixty_six events* (Knowles 2010) and *666_events* (Knowles 2012c).

What *The This Project* offers, which Knowles's projects do not, is the potential for the placed/situated stickies (that is, if they are left in place) to attract the attention of others at a later date, for them to see the blog address on the reverse of the stickie and to perhaps join in the 'play'.

But *The This Project* had requirements that were personally unsustainable, not least of which was the necessity of continuing to promote the project (by continually and actively encouraging participation, something with which I had difficulty as such promotion seemed antithetical to the philosophy of this project and the Fluxus attitude). However, like many Fluxus-inspired projects such as Matt Taggart's *String Theory* (Taggart n.d.), the blog and the invitation remain open to this day and a resource of variously worded yellow stickies is available to those who wish to participate. Some examples of placements appear in Appendix 4 of this exegesis.

experimental play emerging from the this project

One of the works to emerge from *The This Project* was a series of 'flying experiments'. Having discovered a feather in my garage one day, I was curious to see if it could fly. The word 'go' had been contributed to the project, leading to a rather more complex yellow stickie than others (rather than putting merely 'go this' on the stickie I had referred to a dictionary and added every word that goes with 'go').

After filming the feather (which, although in real time, I find reminiscent of slow-moving early Fluxus films), as it was a windy day, I stuck the stickie to the feather and let it go.



Figure 27: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Feather Selected for Flying Experiment*, 2011, video still



Figure 28: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Flying Experiment #1*, 2011, video still

While at first glance the *Flying Experiments* series may seem reminiscent of Igor and Svetlana Kopystiansky's video *Incidents* (1996/97) (a work that records various items blowing in the wind), there are differences. Although I came across the feather in much the same way as Igor and Svetlana Kopystiansky may have come across their random objects, the remainder of the process that formed the work carried an intent: they were experimental performances of a score that had emerged from the complexity of *The This Project*. I would suggest, however, that Igor and Svetlana Kopystiansky's *Incidents* shares commonalities with the 'matterings' video works in this project in which I record everyday emergent phenomena.

The difficulty in achieving this goal (of getting the stickie and feather to fly) is of course linked to failure. Many artists' work has focussed on themes associated with failure as a position of resilience, an example being Bas Jan Ader, with acts of failing, including falling from a roof top in *Fall I (Los Angeles)* (1970), cycling into a canal *Fall II (Amsterdam)* (1970) and losing grip on a tree branch *Broken Fall (Organic)* (1971).

To embrace failure is 'daring to go beyond normal practice and enter a realm of not-knowing' (Le Feuvre 2010, p.13). A self-mocking failure frequently appears in performances of Fluxus scores, it is both a Zen space and an experimental space where success is deemed overrated. In the interconnected networks of those who work with a Fluxus attitude today, the 'professional success' of a person is unimportant, even undesirable. As with the Zen Master who will readily deflate the ego of his student, within Fluxus-inspired networks those who exhibit an inflated ego rather than the work in hand can be very quickly shot down. An example is with those who speak out against Ben Vautier. I suggest that this could be a misunderstanding of Vautier's intent (which

I believe is to *détourner* the artworld), or perhaps exasperation with his over-exuberance. To be concerned about failure, then, could be said to be very unFluxus and also unZen.

In a more serious and political vein, yet still a seemingly pointless exercise which is also located in an everyday environment, is Francis Alÿs's *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing)* in which he pushed a block of ice through the streets of Mexico City until, after nine hours, it had finally melted. The title of this work also brings to mind the themes in this research, including the *dérive* of the Situationists.



Figure 29: Francis Alÿs, *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing)*, 1997, Mexico City

The performance highlights inequalities in Latin America, that for many people a lot of effort is expended for little or no result. It also represents a dissipation of the aesthetics of minimalist objects (Godfrey, Biesenbach & Greenburg, p. 82). Lorna Scott Fox says Alÿs often applies speculative rules such as in a Fluxus score and that the traces he leaves behind and the simplicity of his gestures prompt analogies that can change a person's perceptions (Godfrey, Biesenbach & Greenburg, p. 194).

The political themes that run through Alÿs's works make them aligned more closely to the Situationists' aims of *détournement* than the works in my practice which are not necessarily prompted by political concerns. Although they may not be political by intent, political dimensions sometimes emerge, such as in *Performance of a Score by Allen Bukoff* (2012).

The method of recording Alÿs's performances raises issues relating to the challenges of documentation that have emerged in this research project. Many works suggest that a person other than Alÿs does the filming. In my own circumstance, another person to fulfil this role may not always be available and so I record all the footage myself. This places certain limitations on

my practice and the kinds of performance I may be able to conduct. In the videos of performances that I have done, when I appear this is most often through necessity in order to communicate an idea, for example in *Lullaby for a Grass Trimmer* (2012) or the still images that are part of the *Modalities of Presence* (2013) series. It is not intended to be a ‘selfie’ or putting myself ‘in the frame’ as the subject.

intermedia and play emerging from the this project

As outlined in Part 3, ‘intermedia’ is a term adopted by early Fluxus artist Dick Higgins, ‘an idea he borrowed from Samuel Coleridge (1812) for whom it meant “in the field between the general idea of art media and those of life media” and “between media”—in other words, a dynamic interstitial space between media forms and between art and life structures’ (Higgins 2002, p. 91).

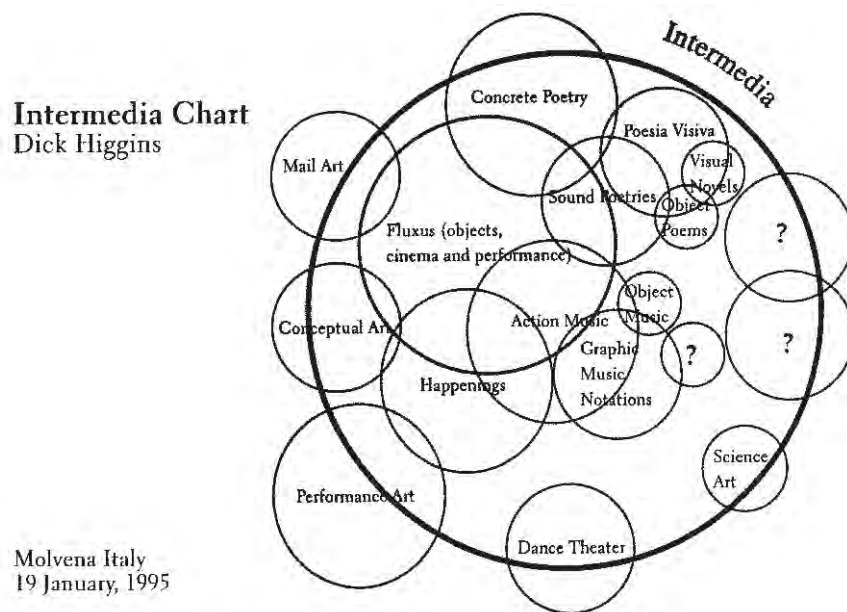


Figure 30: Dick Higgins, *Intermedia Chart*, 1995

During 2012, an opportunity arose to extend *The This Project* by submitting work to the Fluxus component of the *Write Now: Artists and Letterforms* exhibition that showed in the Chicago Cultural Center, 30 September 2011–29 April 2012. In an open and deliberately ‘intermedial’ invitation, the work I sent was *FluxMusic* (2011):



Figure 31: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *FluxMusic*, 2011, CD cases, print on paper, yellow stickies

The three CD cases held three different pads of yellow stickies with different words and on the front cover was the word 'play'. On the inside front cover was the project's score and blog address. At the start of the exhibition, this is what happened—had the curator 'played'?



Figure 32: Fluxus component of the *Write Now: Artists and Letterforms* exhibition
Chicago Cultural Center, 30 September 2011–29 April 2012

Towards the end of the exhibition, this is what had happened—stickies had been moved to various positions over the wall (and possibly beyond)—others had ‘played’:



Figure 33: White circles indicate positions of stickies (people had played)
Fluxus component of the *Write Now: Artists and Letterforms* exhibition
Chicago Cultural Center, 30 September 2011–29 April 2012

This sort of emergence is unpredictable.

more play emerging from the this project

As *The This Project* got underway, another emergent phenomenon was when I woke up one morning with the words *l'incongruité de la langue* 'sounding' in my head during the liminal state of awakening. This was surprising as I only have very little knowledge of French. I became curious. What could it mean? Why should language be 'incongruous'? I discovered that *la langue*, in French, means not only 'language' but also 'tongue', and this was my first playful investigation into the difficulties of language and communication:



Figure 34: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Untitled*, 2011, digital photographs

In many cultures, including our own, the sticking out of one's tongue is a gesture of rebellion, of playful disregard (such as the red tongue and lips logo designed by John Pasche for the Rolling Stones in 1971), and it is no coincidence that the following illustration of an Inca carving was used as a symbol of Fluxus in some of their early publications:



Figure 35: Early Fluxus symbol based on Inca carving

The process of articulation, of finding the right words in order to communicate effectively and precisely (or, on the other hand, open enough to allow varying interpretations such as with Fluxus performance scores) can be frustrating and littered with potential pitfalls. A paradox is that

performance scores may be read by people whose only language is other than that of the score's originator and the question is, therefore, how can the score be used? What happens when it is translated? More broadly, what happens when language is translated into an art form? These issues were highlighted during a seminar series organised by the interdisciplinary Centre for Ideas at the Victorian College of the Arts, the aim of the series being to develop works as part of Hans Ulrich Obrist's *do it* project (Presa 2009, in Obrist 2013, p. 423).

Another playful exploration of this difficulty was *L'incongruité de la langue #2* (2011) where I tried to put my iPhone into my mouth (but failed) to 'see' where language came from and, while saying each of the eight yellow stickies above, simply recorded and then slowed down the footage.

There is some connection between my frustration and difficulty in articulating the words with my phone in my mouth, of trying to 'see' where language comes from, and Matthew Lee Knowles's (2012d) performance *Saying OLYMPICS two thousand and twelve times*. Knowles is known not only for his work as a musician and composer, but also for Fluxus-inspired participatory projects and experimental performances such as *Homage a George Brecht [1–5]* (2008). The playful 'endurance test' of his *OLYMPICS* performance records what happens to our ability to speak when impacted by the stress of repetition. He says:

Two thousand and twelve words, six thousand and thirty six syllables, sixteen thousand and ninety six letters. I repeated the word 'Olympics' two thousand and twelve times. The word went through cycles of recognisability as I lost and regained concentration. My mouth became dry, my vocal cords stretched, my mind muddled and my association and understanding of the word evermore vague. Does this performance represent a frustrated over-saturation or euphoric eagerness? For me, as a composer and a poet, it is simply fitting.

(Knowles 2012d)

The scatological quality of *L'incongruité de la langue #2* is reminiscent of Jacques-André Boiffard's 1930 image, *Bouche*, which is included in the French edition of Bois and Krauss's book *L'informe* (trans. *Formless*) (Bois & Krauss, p. 22).



Figure 36: Jacques-André Boiffard, *Bouche*, [trans. *Mouth*] which accompanied Georges Bataille's article in *Chronique-Dictionnaire*. Documents II/5 1930, p. 299, with the statement 'la terreur et la souffrance atroce font de la bouche l'organe des cris déchirants' [terror and suffering are atrocious mouth organ heartrending cries]— photo J.A. Boiffard



Figure 37: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *L'incongruité de la langue #2*, 2011, video still

The difference between Bouffard's *Bouche* image and the *L'incongruité de la langue #2* video is that the latter is merely playful in intent, although some people have commented that the slowing down of the footage and distortion of sound has given it an animal-like or vagina dentata (toothed vagina) quality, which I find amusing. When shown on larger displays or projected the video is pixelated. This is a quality I accept in all of the works as I am not seeking to produce a high-definition 'artwork' and to me the pixilation suggests an 'immateriality', an instability of matter that relates to Merleau-Ponty's chapter (Merleau-Ponty 1968, pp. 130–155) in which he proposes that the body is intertwined with the world, that it combines both subjective experience and objective existence.

Such notions of immateriality leads us consider whether it is just people and other sentient beings who speak/communicate. According to Merleau-Ponty (1968) it is not only living things that communicate with us. In his disruption of a dualistic subject/object dichotomy, he contends that because we perceive and analyse objects in the same way as we perceive and analyse people's behaviour, that is, through our senses, objects therefore 'speak' with us through our senses and are thereby interpreted in the same way. I would add that this occurs through our whole being which includes memory and meaning, the stimulation of ideas and responses. Objects, therefore, are not separate to us, they are already a part of us.

This notion prompted me to explore, in a playful way, the role of a baby-grand piano at the Tasmanian College of the Arts, Launceston:



Figure 38: Positioning of the baby-grand piano, Tasmanian College of the Arts, Launceston, Tasmania, 2012

On discovering the piano trapped under a cage-like set of stairs, silenced by its positioning, I first of all ‘composed’ a suite of commentary-style instructions as a prelude and then, in honour of John Cage, I had a ‘conversation with a silent piano’.



Figure 39: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Preparing for Performance [prelude to conversation with a silent piano]*, 2012, video still

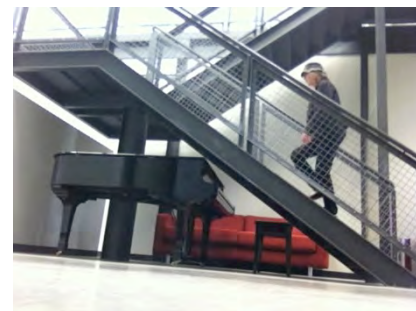


Figure 40: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Excerpt from a conversation with a silent piano*, 2012, video still

A word should be said here about use of the increasingly ubiquitous filters and transitions that can be found across many types of software, particularly those that serve social media platforms (such as those offered by Instagram and Hipstamatic). When trimming the ends of the footage for *Excerpt from a conversation with a silent piano*, I thought it would be fun to use the opening and closing curtains transition in iMovie as a moment of light-hearted self-mockery, alluding to a stage

performance. However, I mostly tend to avoid manipulation of footage and such ‘packaging’ as I see it as unnecessary in the context of this research.

To return to the works that were made for others to play with, *Coffee and Proust* (2012) is another example of a game, this time for a Fluxus-inspired (mail art) exhibition that was to be held in the Puerta Tannhäuser Bookshore-Café in Plasencia, Spain to mark its one-year anniversary. I was reading Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* at the time, and I love coffee, so for this work I used a Cage-style chance operation to determine the random selection of words (one to be taken from each book in my collection), which I then typed onto a satin ribbon to make a nonsensical ‘Proustian sentence’ that could be pulled out of ‘Proust’s mouth’ (referring to the ‘Fluxus tongue’ Inca symbol) and be read either out loud or in silence. The use of typewritten text appears frequently in Fluxus-associated works, and the satin ribbon seemed appropriate to Proust’s time. The total number of words was 443 and the resultant ribbon length came to 6.9 metres. The ribbon, after being spattered with coffee, was then packaged into a humble cardboard box (wabi-sabi), with a label which announced in Spanish ‘Aprobado por PringaDa’ (trans. ‘Approved by PringaDa’) reminiscent of Ben Vautier’s authorisation of everyday objects as art.



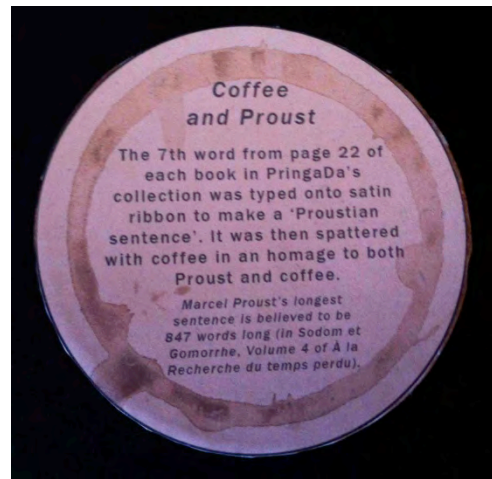
Adding coffee



Ribbon and box



Top of box



Base of box

Figure 41: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Coffee and Proust*, 2012
Typed satin ribbon 6.9 metres, printed labels, cardboard box 70mm diameter x 50mm high approx.

A comparative work for *Coffee and Proust* is Andrew Topel's *War* (2006). Topel's works may be described as experiential-experimental-literature, a type of concrete poetry which is, as he says, 'a hybrid field, on the borderline between text and image, weaving together two interconnected disciplines' (Topel 2011). Although the components of *War* include an extremely long sentence, the words seem to represent a 'stream of consciousness' approach that differs from the chance operation of *Coffee and Proust* (the latter being inspired by John Cage's indeterminacy methods) for the final words of Topel's *War* scroll are: 'thrive Third Reich bike bird beach breach reach retch fetch bet ketchup hydride peroxide oxide ox slide fox glide tide tribal jibe chives troika truck trunk debunk thorium historian rural rubric uric runic rook roil soil oil toil boiled eggs stance dance dart art tart taunt you want more war?' (Topel 2012). In December 2014, Andrew Topel

posted another of his works to his Facebook page, called *Sphere*, the typewritten ribbon form of which bears more similarities to *Coffee and Proust*, but I have been unable to find further details about this piece.



Figure 42: Andrew Topel, *War*, 2006, a 14,141-word sentence, 5.25" x 18' scroll wrapped in a camouflage bandana with dog tags.

An action emerging from *Coffee and Proust* is *L'incongruité de la Langue #3* which playfully explores the frustration of language, of trying to find the right words or, perhaps, the difficulty of eating one's own words.



Figure 44: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *L'incongruité de la Langue #3*, 2012, video still



Figure 43: Andrew Topel, *Sphere*, 2014

Fluxus play is a playful seriousness or serious playfulness. Fluxus play takes many forms, from the early happenings of the 1960s to the vaudeville-style performances by bowler-hat-wearing participants that still happen today at events such as the annual Chicago Fluxfest; from intimate, personal explorations to the slow films of Yoko Ono in the first years of Fluxus and the later slow experimentation of Gregory Steel such as his *Face Sculpture 2009* (Steel 2009), to the playful performance scores. This is different from child's play:

The job of an artist is [...] to change the value of things. [...] In order to change the value of things, you've got to know about life and the situation of the world. You have to be more than a child.

(Ono 1971)

Through play, or a playful approach, an artist can propose these alternate values to others in a less-threatening manner and form. *The This Project*, for example, invited people to play, to notice things, to engage with the world around them in a different way, and place the stickies at sites of their choosing.

The play of *The This Project* is open-ended as the yellow stickies with which people 'tagged' their targets could remain *in situ* for an indefinite length of time, perhaps drawing the attention of others who might then be encouraged to play by accessing the blog address that was stamped on the reverse of each stickie.

Of course, having yellow stickies available from *The This Project* meant a resource with which I could 'just play' when the idea of play emerged. On one such occasion, at the end of summer, I was ready to put my grass trimmer away for winter when I decided to play and ended up with *Lullaby for a Grass Trimmer* (2012). Although both of us are influenced by Fluxus, iKatun-member kanarinka's *Iraq Lullaby Service* (2009), a 'singing syndication service' in which every one or two weeks she sang her child to sleep with words from contemporary Iraqi blogs to the tune of Brahms's Lullaby, is quite different in tone to the lullaby I sang to my grass trimmer. Whereas kanarinka's project may be seen, according to the Yoko Ono quote above, as 'changing the value of things' in a political or social sense, *Lullaby for a Grass Trimmer* expresses a personal way of being with the world where our empathic sense can also become intertwined with material objects, similarly to the 'caged piano'.



Figure 45: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Lullaby for a Grass Trimmer*, 2012, video still

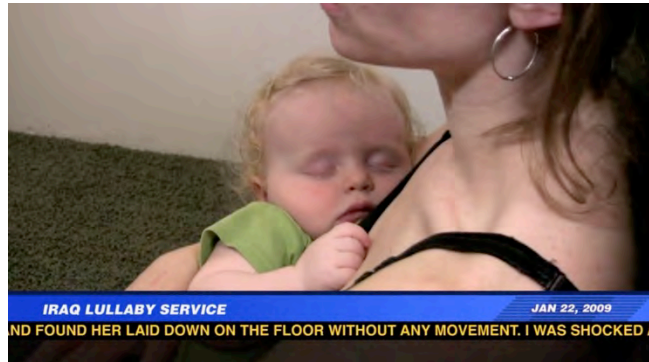


Figure 46: kanarinka, *Iraq Lullaby Service*, 2009, video still

intermedia and the body

The This Project had led to experimentation with various types of play, and now it was time to explore another type, this time questioning ‘the this of the body’ in the *Modalities of Presence* series of 2013. This series probed the silent yet interconnected spaces of personal and others’ presence, starting from this body, here, at this time.

As stated previously, Higgins claimed that intermedia is a ‘dynamic interstitial space between media forms and between art and life structures’ (Higgins 2002, p. 91). My curiosity had prompted me to explore how one could include and reposition the body, life, and all of its complexities into the intermedia ‘picture’ that had been outlined by Dick Higgins and which only alluded to the body by reference to performance and happenings. Bodies, after all, are the means through which all of the media identified by Higgins emerge and merge. Carbone (2004) explains Merleau-Ponty’s notion in relation to this as follows:

As seeing-visible, we are in fact inherent in a visible present which, all the while inhabiting us, announces and opens up to us simultaneously other invisible dimensions of space and time... ‘universal dimensionality’.

(Carbone, Mauro 2004, pp. 6–7)

For these works, I adopted a simple playful approach inspired by Zen and Merleau-Ponty. As a starting point, I photographed the parts of my body that seem to sense most on a daily basis: nose, eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet. In tune with the non-elitist traditions of Fluxus, I had little concern for the aesthetic qualities of the image when taking these ‘selfies’: my intent was related

more to intimacy and rawness and the scatological qualities of Bataille's *l'informe* (formlessness) than to achieving the perfect photographic image. Importantly, the black and white format of the images acts as a foil that allowed me to conduct an irreverent act of desecration, of transgression that critiques the conventions of black and white photography at the same time as asking seriously playful and playfully serious questions about what it is to have a body, a body that senses, what is the 'form' of the body, what is its matter, its states of physical, imaginary and conscious flux.



Figure 47: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Modalities of Presence #5 (Foot)* (2013) video still



Figure 48: Jacques-André Boiffard, *Gros orteil, sujet féminin, 24 ans*, [trans. Big toe, subject female, 24 years], *Documents 6*, 1929, p. 301.

Liminality is defined by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as being 'of, relating to, or being an intermediate state, phase, or condition'. Another source states it is a 'psychological, neurological, or metaphysical subjective, conscious state of being on the "threshold" of or between two different existential planes' (Understanding New Media 2010). It is a state that is related to Zen mindfulness.

As I entered this transitory and ambiguous limitrophe and wrote from the medium of my hand, using a graphics tablet, over the top of each digital photograph, recording to the medium of video through computer screen capture as I went, my sense of 'self' fluctuated from personal recall to the empathic space that links to 'other possible selves' (Merleau-Ponty) (Matthews 2002, p. 97).

The *Modalities of Presence* works differ from those works where static text is placed over an image, where the speed of the reading eye can be rapid and as variable as the viewer, such as in this example by Ian Burn:

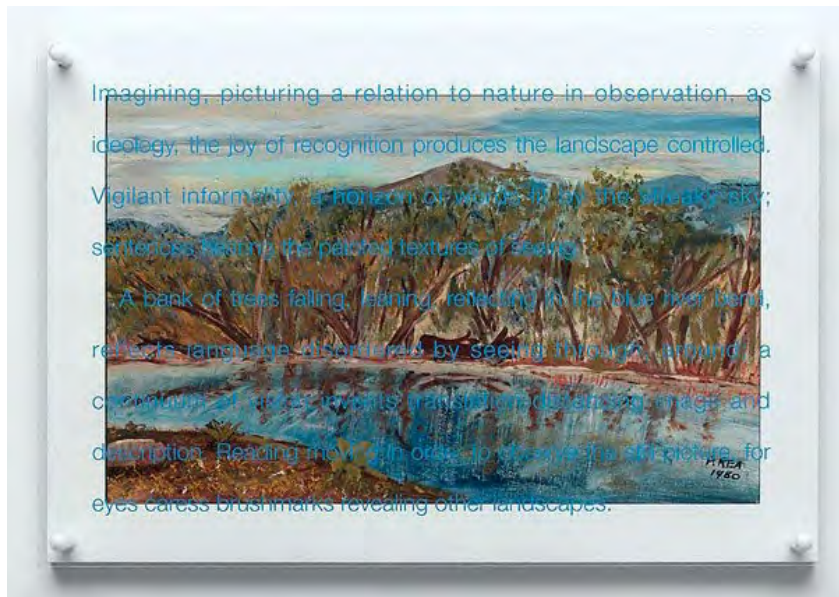


Figure 49: Ian Burn, *'Value added' landscape no.11*, 1993,
oil and ink on board, transparent synthetic polymer resin, 59 x 87 x 10.5 cm

In the *Modalities of Presence* series, the slow pace at which the words reveal themselves invites a slowing-down of the viewer, an invitation to engage over time, to be 'in the moment'.

The words disappear and reappear as they traverse the light and dark of each photograph, implying the presence and engagement and fluxing of the hollow (Merleau-Ponty). In the process of making, no script was written or followed. No preconceived idea of associations was rehearsed. The liminal state moved in and out of an empathic state, and words were written in response to whatever emerged. Unlike the 'matterings' works, where emergent phenomena in the everyday are simply recorded, these works carry some level of intent as a calm focus was required, yet at the same time an awareness of 'this isn't personal' even when the personal popped in. This Zen-like approach, reducing ego as much as possible, meant that whatever came to mind was what was written, and the screen capture records the moments of hesitation awaiting the next emergence.

Of course there were interruptions (such as a nudge from my dog causing a sweep of the pen across the image/screen) and sometimes it took more than one take before a complete 'picture' presented itself. There is potential for these 'failures' to form the basis of another series with a different emphasis.

A companion to the *Modalities of Presence* series is another exploratory video, *Dehiscence* (2012). There are two direct references that informed these works. The first is a saying from the *Heart Sutra* of Mahayana Buddhism:

Form is emptiness; emptiness is form.

The second is a quote from Merleau-Ponty:

...a sort of dehiscence opens my body in two, and because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we into the things.

(Merleau-Ponty, p. 123)

Dehiscence is simple black and white slowed-down footage of my hand moving, in which the shadows erase form, destabilising materiality. It is reminiscent of early black and white Fluxus films such as Yoko Ono's *Eye Blink - Flux Film 09* (1966) (no longer available on YouTube) and is in some ways related to Gregory Steel's *Face Sculpture* (2009). Steel is an Assistant Professor at Indiana University who says he has 'an interest in Philosophy, Critical Theory and Aesthetics'. He says of *Face Sculpture* that it is 'part of a long thread of artistic research regarding the human perceptual toolset and consciousness'. Steel was also a participant in Matt Taggart's *Exquisite Performance* (mentioned in the following section) and his students have performed many of the scores from that project.

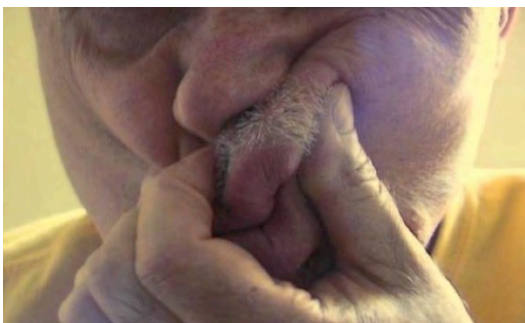


Figure 50: Gregory Steel, *Face Sculpture*, 2009, video still



Figure 51: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Dehiscence*, 2012, video still

As mentioned in Part 3 of this exegesis, the event score (sometimes referred to as performance score) is aimed at highlighting and exploring 'the possibilities of significance in what is usually deemed insignificant' (Minnesota Center for Book Arts n.d.). This aim has strong relevance to this project and throughout its duration I have experimented with writing event scores.

For the most part, the scores that feature within the parameters of this project are short, being inspired by those of George Brecht and Yoko Ono, whose scores are often Zen-like. Yoko Ono's most well known book of scores is *Grapefruit* (1964), and in 2013 I was delighted to find her more recent compilation of scores, *Acorn* (2013), available as an ebook, and then even more delighted to find within it a score that resonates with the *Soundings* (2012) series I had already commenced:

EARTHPIECE I

Listen to the sound of the fire burning

in the center of the globe.

(Yoko Ono 2013)

With reference to the title of the *Soundings* series, the term 'soundings' is not only about what is heard, it is much broader than that and the statements call for imagination, empathy, what is felt. 'Soundings' also implies the 'sonarous' qualities of the score.

Early in the *Soundings* series I happened upon an internet post which indicated there is a Q&A link on Facebook and Twitter where Yoko Ono selects 10 questions to answer every Friday. I wondered what her answer would be to the question 'What is within the moment of hesitation?' so I posted it without any expectation that it would reach the 'final cut'.

To my surprise, the question was selected and an answer appeared on the webpage as the last item in the Facebook section. At the time, I was repeatedly having to defend my proposal that hesitation is more than what it seems, so I was much heartened by her (or her team's?) answer which implied a complexity beyond the usual interpretation of 'hesitation':

'A thousand thoughts.'

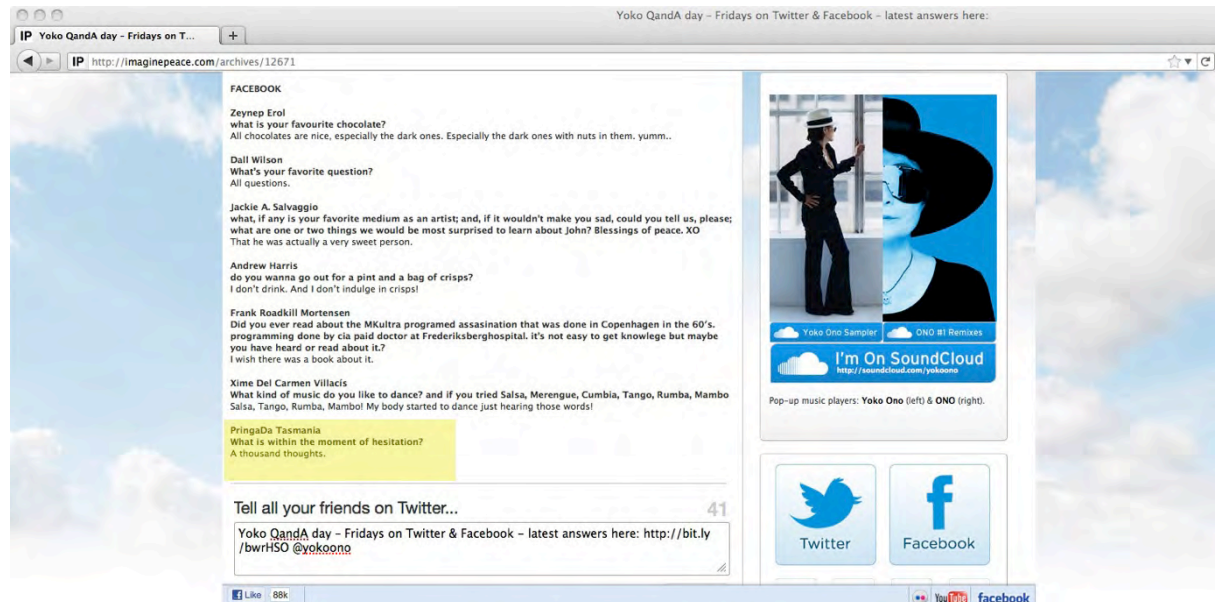


Figure 52: Yoko Ono's Answer (highlighted in yellow)

The *Soundings* series is still evolving, as I respond with 'soundings' only when prompted by emergent phenomena. It will likely become a participatory project, with others contributing their own 'soundings' until a thousand soundings are gathered and, in acknowledgment of Yoko Ono's answer, it will be called *A Thousand Soundings*.

The first 12 scores, *Soundings 1–12* (2012) are included in this project as an example. The words appear as if on an invisible staff (as in music) of five lines and they appear slowly, silently echoing the pace of calm breathing. The addition of the word 'until' extends the moment.

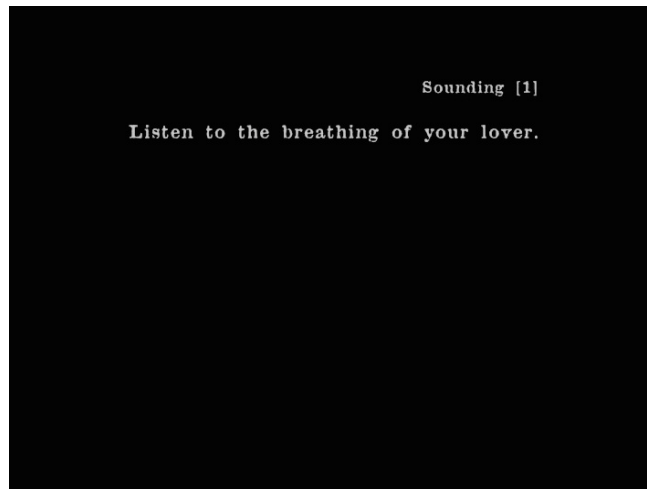


Figure 53: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Soundings 1–12*, 2012, video still

The pace at which the words are revealed in the *Soundings* series is very different from, for example, the works of Jenny Holzer which are often subversively projected in the midst of advertisements in public spaces or by use of electronic LED displays. Her use of language and style of work seem to sound an alarm and disturb our complacency by drawing our attention to serious socio-political issues, whereas the *Soundings* aim to gently generate a calm Zen-like space in which experiential metaphors can be explored.



Figure 54: Still from video: Jenny Holzer: *Writing & Difficulty* | Art21 “Exclusive”

As mentioned previously, my preference is for short, Zen-like scores. However, there are examples of complex scores that have emerged during this project. One of these is *F.A.C.E.* (2011) which I wrote in response to an invitation from Matt Taggart to submit a score for *Exquisite Performance*. He was curating the performance and it was to be performed at the *Exquisite Corpse Festival*, Space on White, New York in October 2011. Some 30 artists from around the world submitted scores for this performance, which was to be performed using chance operation

(à la John Cage). Aware that amongst the many forms of output produced by Matt Taggart is noise art, the score I sent was:

F.A.C.E.



Figure 55: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *F.A.C.E.*, 2011

The title *F.A.C.E.* refers to the four notes in the ‘in between’ spaces of the treble clef staff (F, A, C and E) and also to the first step of the Surrealists’ game, Exquisite Corpse, which in the context of drawing a figure is a face. This explored the ‘inbetween-ness’ of intermedia (as described by Dick Higgins). Deliberately handwritten, the score carried an instruction in Italian, as with traditional music scores: ‘Animato con chiasse’ means ‘animated with noise’. The notation is in the form of emoticons, implying an animated noise-based series of facial expressions.

However, this score may be seen as a ‘failure’ in terms of its transportability to a range of situations, as it is difficult to comprehend. For example, I discovered at a later date a video recording of *Exquisite Performance* being performed by students at Indiana University. Matt Taggart had sent a set of cards of all the *Exquisite Performance* scores to all participants. These included Gregory Steel who then invited his students to choose a card and perform the score. On the video a young woman appears to have selected the *F.A.C.E.* score for, after looking perplexed for a moment, she then decided her only option was to sing my name (my real name had been printed on the card rather than PringaDa). Although this rendered the score a ‘failure’, I found this amusing and quite delightful, as to hear your name sung by a complete stranger on the other side of the world does not happen too often, and I consider it an emergent phenomenon arising from a complex situation.

An even more complex score than *F.A.C.E.* is *Close the Gallery (An Instruction from the Far Edge)* (2013) which was shown (and had a role to play) in the exhibition *Fluxjob*, one of the co-curators of which was Keith Buccholz who organises the annual *Fluxfest* in Chicago. Unusually for Fluxus-celebratory projects and events, participation in this exhibition was by selection, however it

started with this open call on Fluxus-related internet platforms which read as follows, and early exhibition documentation carried a lively graphic, very much ‘in the spirit of Fluxus’:

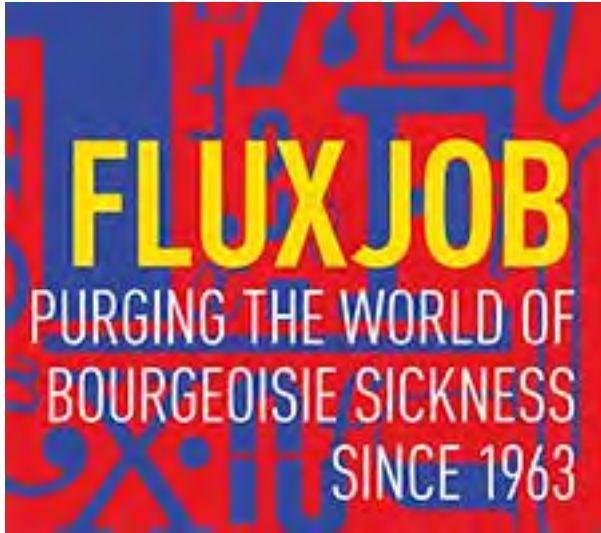


Figure 56: *Fluxjob* publicity material, 2014

Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA) seeks art for inclusion in a curated exhibition that will feature contemporary artists working in the spirit of Fluxus.

In the 1960s, George Maciunas urged a small group of artists to purge the world of bourgeois sickness and dead art. The result was Fluxus, a non-movement that expanded the definitions of what art can be. Fluxjob will be an exploration of contemporary artists who continue to create interdisciplinary anti-art that is ephemeral, inexpensive, and interactive.

The exhibition will be presented in MCBA's main gallery February 7 to July 6, 2014.

All media and formats are welcome. This includes, but is not limited to: offset publications, magazines, assemblings, zines, boxed sets, games, posters, prints, mail art, drawings, digital works, democratic multiples, performance scores and artists' books in their many forms.

There is no entry or participation fee. Selected artists will be responsible for all shipping costs.

My preference is to only participate in projects if something moves me to do so, if it ‘speaks to me’. While casually considering the open call to artists to participate in *Fluxjob* and remembering Maciunas’s purging, the words ‘close the gallery’ just popped into my head, it was as if I had heard them said, and it was from this that the score developed. What I sent to the organisers for consideration for inclusion was a score that was formatted, illustrated and worded as follows:

CLOSE THE GALLERY

(an instruction from the far edge)

1. The gallery is open.
2. Using a cell phone, the person in the gallery sends a text message to the person at the far edge.
3. The text message says FLUX and the length of time the person will be in the gallery.
4. The person at the far edge performs a chance operation to determine the time, within the given timeframe, to send the return text message.
5. At the determined time, the person at the far edge texts the words CLOSE THE GALLERY to the person in the gallery.
6. The person in the gallery proceeds to close the gallery.
7. The gallery is closed.

Notes:

Who can perform the score? Anyone

Where can they perform the score? In any gallery

When can they perform the score? During gallery opening hours

How can the gallery be closed? By any method

For what length of time can the gallery be closed? Any length of time

PringaDa, 2013

CLOSE THE GALLERY

(an instruction from the far edge)

Text the word FLUX and length of time
you will be in the gallery to the far edge:

011 61 4 29 191 222



Note: The far edge cell phone number includes
international dialling code from the US

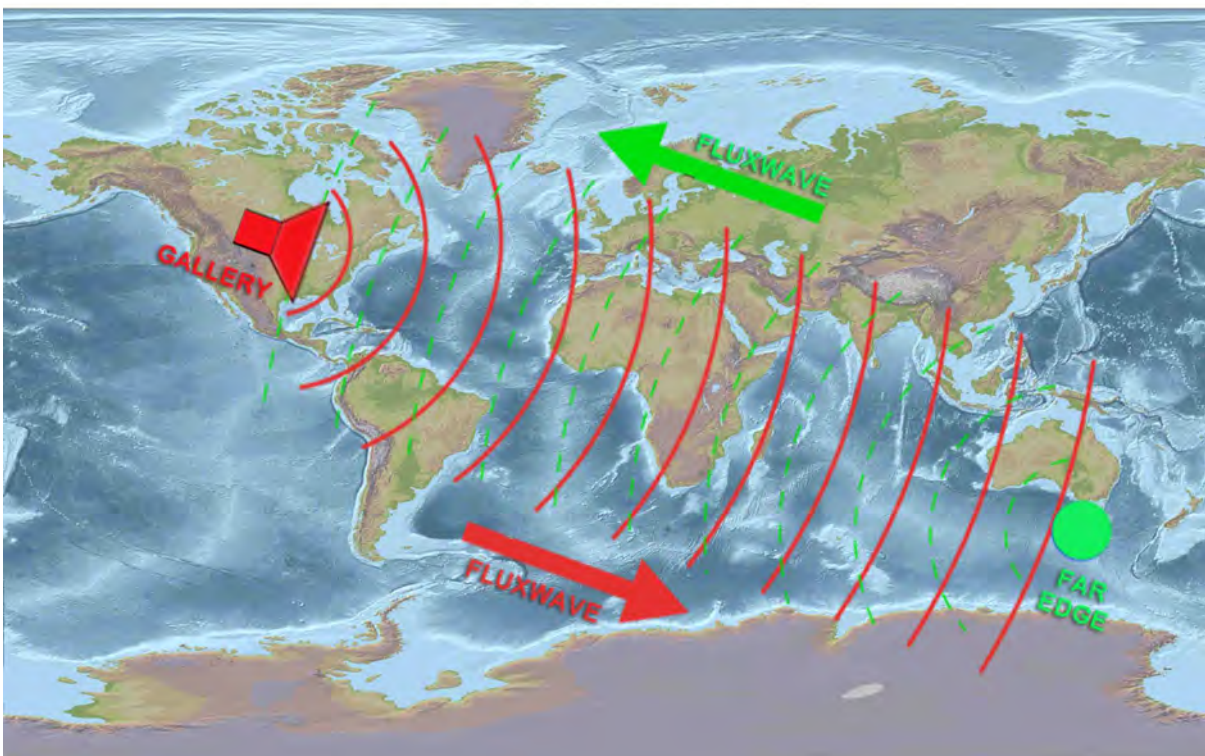


Figure 57: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Close the Gallery (An Instruction from the Far Edge)*, 2013

The second page that was submitted was for the purposes of this event only. The 'sonarous' qualities of the 'event/performance score', as outlined in Part 4 of this exegesis, is an obvious reference in the illustration that accompanied the score, as is the 'Fluxwave' reference to fluidity.

What followed was several months when, for the duration of the exhibition, the score intermittently 'disturbed' my daily life as much as its performance potentially disturbed gallery operations (depending on whether the person in the gallery actually attempted to, or succeeded in, closing the gallery), which is representative of the emergence that can occur out of composite complexity. Fluxus-type event documentation tends to be haphazard and so it is necessary to 'let go' and just put things out there without any expectation of finding out what happened. However, with this score, there was feedback of sorts. I received a call from overseas from someone saying she was outside the gallery and the door was locked. I can only guess that perhaps someone may have closed the gallery (as I had received a 'FLUX' text a short time before) and put a sign on the door saying to phone my number to get it re-opened. Towards the end of our real-time conversation, the caller was laughing and there were other voices so I assume all was well, that someone perhaps rescued her by re-opening the doors. This highlights a Zen-like attitude that I believe lives within the Fluxus attitude which necessitates acceptance, to surrender control, to not necessarily know, and to engage with a quiet sense of humour.

During this project was the centenary of the birth of John Cage. John Cage is known mostly for his work as a composer, music theorist, writer, philosopher and poet. He is less well known for his interest in and passion for mycology (a branch of biology concerned with the study of fungi). Paul Sadowski, secretary of the New York Mycological Society that was revived by Cage, says:

...he made a deal with the New School. They wanted him to teach a music class, and he said he would if he could also teach [a] mushroom identification class. So they agreed to let him do it...

(FERENCE 2012)

So, in 2012, as an homage to John Cage, to bring his love of mushrooms out of the dark and to speak the silence of his mycological passion, I wrote the score:

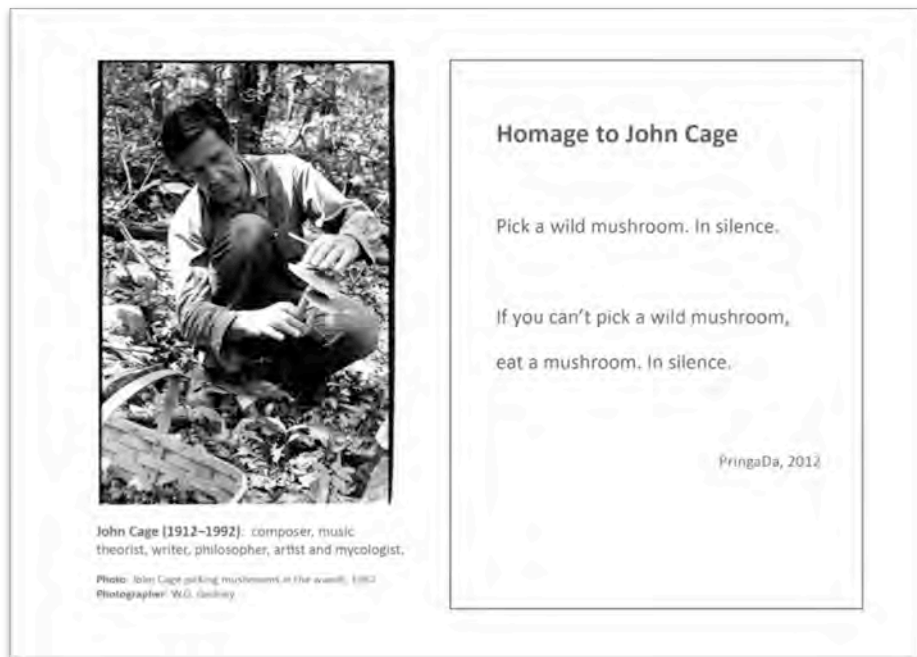


Figure 58: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Homage to John Cage*, 2012

This then led to a second score that references John Cage's 'prepared pianos', where he put objects and ironmongery on and between the strings of a piano in order to change the sounds. Of this, Cage said:

When I first placed objects between piano strings, it was with the desire to possess sounds (to be able to repeat them). But, as the music left my home and went from piano to piano and from pianist to pianist, it became clear that not only are two pianists essentially different from one another, but two pianos are not the same either. Instead of the possibility of repetition, we are faced in life with the unique qualities and characteristics of each occasion.

The prepared piano, impressions I had from the work of artist friends, study of Zen Buddhism, ramblings in fields and forests of mushrooms, all led me to the enjoyment of things as they come, as they happen, rather than as they are possessed or kept or forced to be.

(Cage 1972)



Figure 59: *Tim Ovens plays John Cage · Sonata X for Prepared Piano*, n.d., video still
The German pianist Tim Ovens plays the 10th sonata of John Cage's *Sonatas & Interludes* for prepared piano. The piano strings are prepared with screws, pieces of plastic, rubber and more to get a drumlike sound.

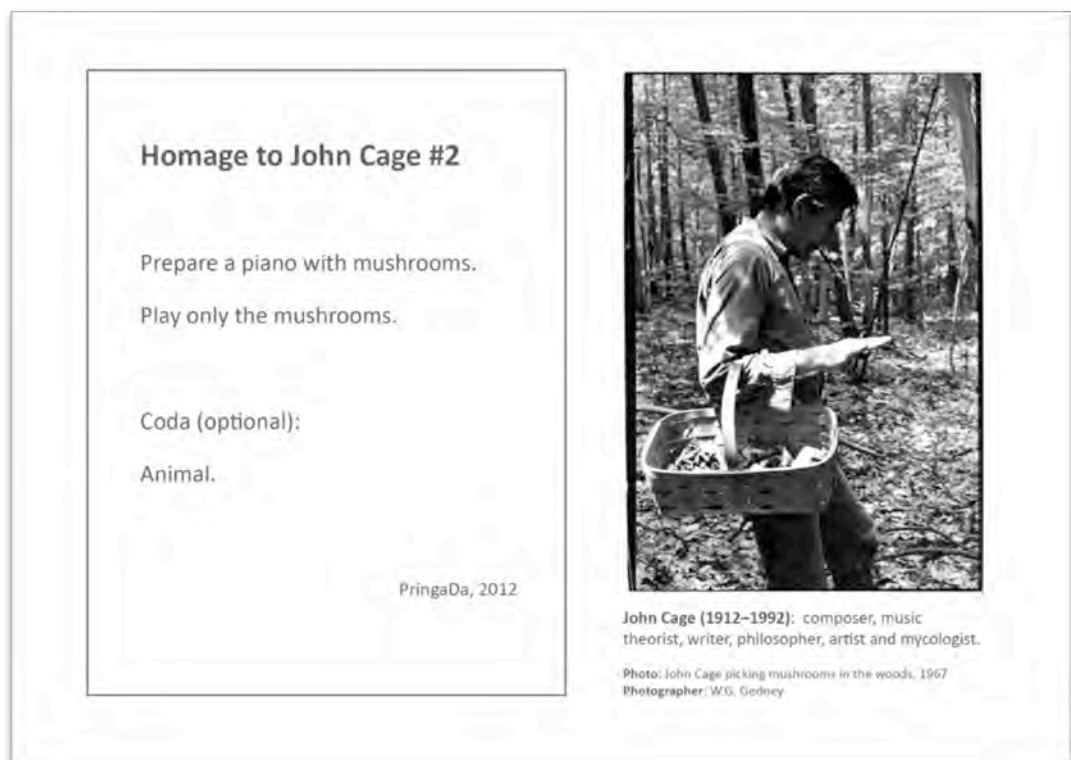


Figure 60: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Homage to John Cage #2*, 2012

My performance of the *Homage to John Cage #2* score, like many Fluxus-inspired works, is playful both conceptually and in performance. There are plays on the word 'prepare', on the fact the piano had been unplayed for some time (it was *unprepared* and hence had grown mushrooms and the keys stuck) and the impromptu appearance of my Australian Staghound during the performance became the coda (Cage mentions deer in the extract below):

I have spent many pleasant hours in the woods conducting performances of my silent piece...At one performance, I passed the first movement by attempting the identification of a mushroom....The second movement was extremely dramatic, beginning with the sounds of a buck and a doe leaping up to within ten feet of my rocky podium.

(Cage 1961, p. 276)



Figure 61: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Homage to John Cage #2*, 2012, video still

Other scores that I have written include one that took physical form, submitted in 2014 to *Fluxbox*, which the call out described as an exhibition of ‘Fluxus inspired boxes, packages and games’ curated by Keith Buchholz. As matches are part of my everyday life, the work I sent was a matchbox full of 45 contemplated matches (a Zen-like activity), which combined an earlier score I had written in 2008 (called *Finders Keepers*) with a newer, ‘safe’, version (the subtitle plays on the words ‘safety matches’ printed on the box). These scores appear on the back of the matchbox along with the results of my performances of the original score (thumbnail images of ‘found matches’ from an internet dating site carefully pasted onto the front) and the second version (spent/contemplated matches inside):

Finders Keepers

Join a dating website.
Do something with what you find.
Keep it.

PringaDa 2008

Finders Keepers (Safe Version)

Join a dating website.
Contemplate a match.

PringaDa 2014



Figure 62: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Finders Keepers*, 2014

(exhibited in *Fluxbox*, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, 20 February – 13 March 2014 and subsequently Minnesota Center for Book Arts, Minneapolis until 6 July 2014)

Matches and matchboxes have long been of interest to both early Fluxus artists and those who continue the attitude to this day. One of the most well known examples is perhaps this work by Ben Vautier:



Figure 63: Ben Vautier, *Total Art Match-Box* (1965), commercial matchbox with matches, offset on card stock label, 1 ½ x 2 x ½, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection

While Ben Vautier's *Total Art Match-Box* has a political/social tone that is strongly related to the Situationists' *détournement*, my '*détournement*' as represented in *Finders Keepers* is perhaps more personal, although it could be said to be based on the 'drifting' attitude of *dérive* ('see what you find'). Both works, however, relate to the 'spirit of Fluxus' and are representative of a playful attitude.

The *Fluxbox* exhibition coincided in part with the annual *Fluxfest*, held in Chicago in February 2014. I wrote a selection of scores for this, which were printed for distribution and performance in the festival's scorebook. They represent a useful sample of the range of scores that come to me from time to time: some are lightly serious, some are metaphorical, and occasionally there may be others (such as *Banana Piece* below) which are more a 'dipping of the big toe' into the 'vaudeville' style of some early Fluxus performances.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|----|----------------------------------|---|---------------------|-----------------|---|--|
| <p>C. MEHRLE BENNETT</p> <p>Freeing the Breath - 2011</p> <p>First person loudly blows into cupped hands, seals cupped hands quickly and hands off the breath to next person's cupped hands.</p> <p>After receipt of breath, that person seals cupped hands quickly and carefully hands off breath to the next person. Repeat this action up until last person in line.</p> <p>Last person in line to receive the breath quickly seals cupped hands and then, with a grand gesture, frees the breath into the sky.</p> <p>WALK - 2013 (Text might be based on a poem by John M. Bennett, or on something else)</p> <p>Assign a two or three word script to nine people who stand in a circle facing OUT.</p> <p>Performer "C" walks around the circle and then throws one shoe in middle of circle, yelling "Shoe!" - Each time "C" passes a person, they must say a word from their script.</p> <p>Performer "C" walks around the circle again and then throws the other shoe in middle of circle, yelling "Shoe!" - Again, each time "C" passes a person, they must say a word from their script.</p> <p>The direction of walking might be changed anytime by "C" to improvise on sound of text.</p> | | <p>Pringada</p> <p>EMPATHY PIECE</p> <p>On a musical instrument, a single note is played repeatedly.</p> <p>The piece ends when the listener hears the player's heartbeat.</p> <p>COMMUNICATION PIECE</p> <p>A person breathes on a mirror and writes a word or message.</p> <p>The mirror is passed to another person. The other person does not have to be close by.</p> <p>The other person reads the word or message.</p> <p>Optional: Repeat until the mirror is a book.</p> <p>TRAFFIC PIECE</p> <p>Listen to the hum of traffic.</p> <p>When the traffic stops, start humming.</p> <p>PHILANTHROPY PIECE</p> <p>In the street, place a coin in a corner.</p> <p>Repeat (another coin, another corner) until no coins are left.</p> <p>Let someone else gather the coins.</p> | <p>BANANA PIECE</p> <p>Bananas are consumed.</p> <p>Banana skins are tied to soles of feet.</p> <p>A walk is taken.</p> <p>CLOSE THE GALLERY (Version 2)</p> <p>Close the gallery.</p> <p>Find everyday art.</p> <p>Find art every day.</p> <p>CLOSE THE GALLERY (Version 3)</p> <p>Close the gallery.</p> <p>Close the gallery again.</p> <p>Close the gallery again and again.</p> <p>Brandstifter</p> <p>the short score - 2014 write a short score for a book which is pretty much layed out already</p> <p>send it at the last moment before the books is printed</p> | | | | | | | |
| <p>Reid Wood</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Location</td> <td>Event Score</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Reid Wood(chuck) 1. How Much?</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Zeno's Donut</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. You Are Here</td> <td>1. Donut on paper or plastic plate. 2. Cut donut in half and eat one half. 3. Cut half in half and eat one half. 4. Continue ad infinitum.</td> </tr> </table> | | Location | Event Score | 1. | Reid Wood(chuck) 1. How Much? |  | Zeno's Donut | 2. You Are Here | 1. Donut on paper or plastic plate. 2. Cut donut in half and eat one half. 3. Cut half in half and eat one half. 4. Continue ad infinitum. | |
| Location | Event Score | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Reid Wood(chuck) 1. How Much? | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Zeno's Donut | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. You Are Here | 1. Donut on paper or plastic plate. 2. Cut donut in half and eat one half. 3. Cut half in half and eat one half. 4. Continue ad infinitum. | | | | | | | | | |

Figure 64: *Fluxfest Chicago Scorebook*, 2014, pp. 14–15

sometimes I perform scores by others

Amongst the scores that I have performed which were written by others are two from *Exquisite Performance*, which was mentioned previously. The first is a score by Allen Bukoff:

Put a band-aid on a rock.

(Allen Bukoff 2011)

I had seen images of other performances of this score, carried out simply, such as Matt Taggart's photograph of a bandaid on a rock on the seat of his car.

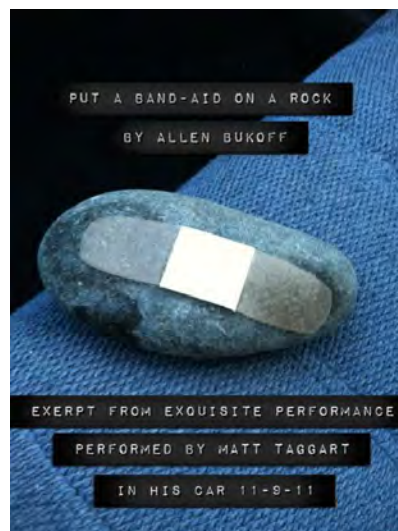


Figure 65: Matt Taggart, *Put a Band-Aid on a Rock* by Allen Bukoff, *Excerpt from Exquisite Performance* performed by Matt Taggart in his Car 11-9-11, 2011

This was articulated simply, yet hinted at complexity. To me, it said 'The rock has travelled a long way in terms of universal time. Now it is travelling again'.

Over time, something about this score resonated with me and would not go away. So, like the research question 'What is within the moment of hesitation?', I considered what it might mean. Rocks have travelled a long way through the universe (in *wabi-sabi* terms, an 'appreciation of the cosmic order') and I asked myself 'Would a band-aid help any damage that may have occurred?' I thought 'Poor rock...' (reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty and how we relate to things). What about really big rocks...?

So, in a simple and unpretentious yet sincere gesture, I recorded my performance of the score:



Figure 66: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Performance of a Score by Allen Bukoff from Exquisite Performance* curated by Matt Taggart 2012, video still

After I shared this video on Facebook, Allen Bukoff commented that I had moved the score from a head space into a heart space:

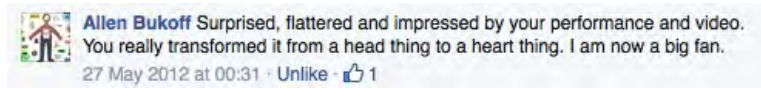


Figure 67: Allen Bukoff Comment via Facebook, 2012

This comment led me to an understanding of another theme that runs throughout this research, that it is about being human in every sense, including how we may respond emotionally or empathically, and this is something which sets many aspects of this research apart from the intellectual play of some conceptual art, for example Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965).

The second performance of a score from *Exquisite Performance* was of one by Cecil Touchon:

Standing at an intersection with traffic lights, cross the street when the sign says 'WALK'.

Standing on the far corner, turn to right, then cross to the other side of the next street when the sign says 'WALK'.

Continue indefinitely.

(Cecil Touchon 2011)

In a playful way, this score to me suggests a more contained rendering of the *dérive* of the Situationists. Its repetition and circularity could result in a process akin to a Zen-like meditation, and provide an open ‘field of possibilities’ to occur en route. A related project was undertaken in September 2013 by The Art Guys as part of their year-long *12 Events* project. Called *Intersection*, they repeatedly crossed ‘the busiest street intersection in Houston, first in one direction for four hours (clockwise), then in the other direction for four hours (counter clockwise)’ (The Art Guys 2013).

An excerpt from my performance of Cecil Touchon’s score has been included in the presentation for this project.



Figure 68: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Performance of a Score by Cecil Touchon* from *Exquisite Performance* curated by Matt Taggart, 2012, video still

A comparative example for this work is Melbourne-based artist Thomas Quirk’s audio walking tour that was featured as part of the Junction Arts Festival, Launceston in 2014. In this work, people were invited to explore local histories and geographies through stories heard while walking along specific routes. What this experience does not offer, however, is the flexibility of a Fluxus-type score where the latter can be applied at any time, by anyone, in any place. An example is George Brecht’s score *Drip Music, Second Version* (1959) (Friedman, Smith & Sawchyn 2002) which simply says ‘Dripping’ (i.e. it can be anything dripping heard, felt or seen by anyone, made by anything, at any time). Quirk’s Launceston tour, being place-and-time-based, limits the possibilities, although in general his work may be said to share some common ground with Dick Higgins’s definition of intermedia for Quirk says he is ‘excited by the strange possibilities that are

discovered when theatre collides with [performance, video, sculpture and spatial installation]' (Metro Arts 2014). However, the mention of 'social' in his website statement—that it is 'at an intersection where art meets with the everyday, the social, the street' (Quirk n.d.)—could be interpreted as placing these types of work within the realm of social practice which, from my point of view, has more in common with relational aesthetics.

There are many contemporary artists who use walking as a mode of art practice, such as members of the US Walking Artists Network (n.d.) and the artists who participate in the *Walk with the Artist* project, the two most recent iterations of which were held in Berlin and involved nine international artists (Walk with the Artist n.d.). While these go some way towards opening up possibilities, the fact that they are associated with a specific place and time means that they are limited in comparison to the Fluxus event score. The latter allows individuals to interpret the score in varying situations across time (albeit that Touchon's score, for example, requires an intersection with traffic lights). The 'matterings' works in this research project are even more open in that they suggest finding one's own significant moments of emergence in the everyday.

Once a score is known, it can emerge unannounced at any time in one's everyday life. In 2012, for example, the year of the centenary of the birth of John Cage, my neighbour's gardener was busy. For several moments I observed and listened, mesmerised by first a grass trimmer and then a lawnmower through the fly screen of my open kitchen window. In some ways, this captivating of my attention by an emergent phenomenon was similar to what I describe as 'matterings', but this extended moment somehow merged with John Cage's 4'33" score in my consciousness and the words 'summer silence' came to mind. Therefore the grass trimmer recording became *Summer Silence I* (documented in the 'journal for this project) and the lawnmower one became *Summer Silence II*. Both were performances of John Cage's 4'33", and included his scored instruction 'tacet' which in musical notation means 'it is silent'.



Figure 69: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Summer Silence II*, 2012, video still

The ‘hazy days of summer’ seem to be captured by the haziness of the trees, while the grid of the fly screen provides a *moiré* effect and its slight movement creates a Hermann grid illusion with its ‘disappearing and reappearing’ (visible and invisible) white dots at the grid’s intersections as if playing games with our vision (the latter being an emergent phenomenon noticeable only after recording had taken place). The lawnmower almost hums a lullaby with its low monotonous sound, encouraging a Zen-like meditation before a head (somewhat ironically wearing yellow earmuffs) suddenly emerges above the fence line.

In some ways the haziness of this footage is reminiscent of German artist Thomas Ruff’s *jpeg*s series (example below). However, Ruff’s series is comprised of photographs that he sources primarily from the internet and then enlarges to a very large scale, exaggerating the patterns made by pixels. They are still images, whereas *Summer Silence II* captures the extended moment.

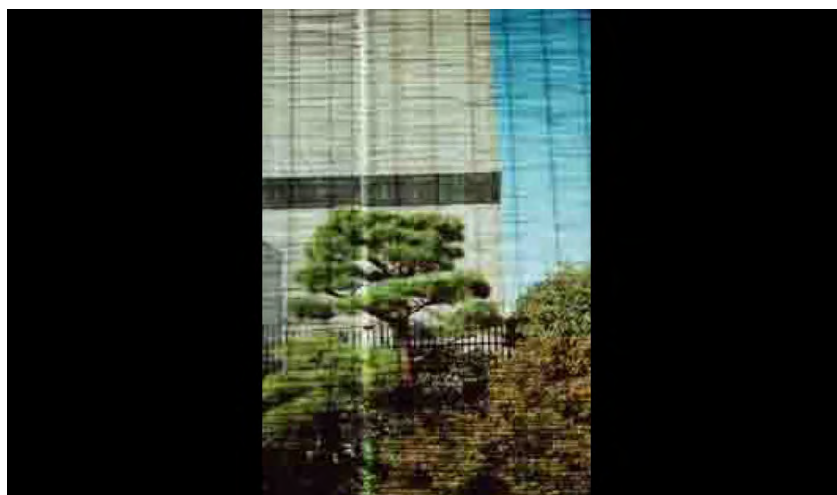


Figure 70: Thomas Ruff, *jpeg kj01*, 2007

Another example of a performance of someone else's score came about in a similar manner one day while sitting at my kitchen table drinking a glass of water. The sunshine was creating interesting effects through the semi-slumped form of the glass, this captured my attention as in a kind of emergence, and so I wondered what would happen if I performed George Brecht's *Drip Music (Version 1)* (1959), the score for which reads:

A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged
so that the water falls into the vessel.

George Brecht 1959

I found the original, real-time footage quite interesting, engaging, but could not resist having a play. At first I chopped up the footage and inter-spliced it (documentation of this is in the 'journal' for this project). A suggestion was then made to try masking and see what happened. As previously stated, in general the only editing of the raw footage I carry out is tidying up the beginnings and ends. While at first I was a little reluctant to make such an intervention, I soon realised that masking is less of an intervention than that of cutting up the footage, that this 'focus' is frequently how our perception works, and so I learned a new video-editing technique and *Drip Drawing III* (2013) came into being.

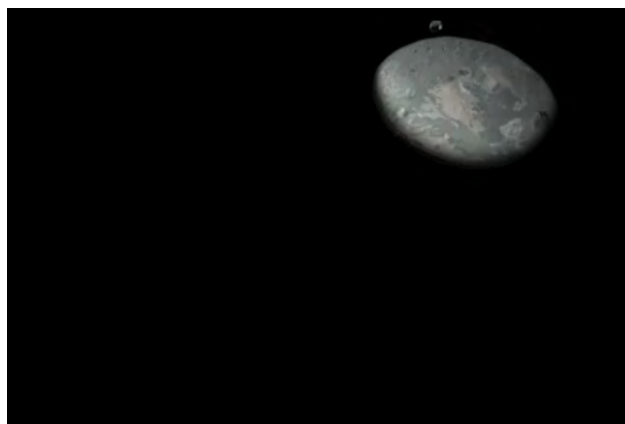


Figure 71: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Drip Drawing III*, 2013, video still

This work operates in a quite dissimilar manner to some other works about water. An example is Roni Horn's *Nine Liquid Incidents* (2010–2012):



Figure 72: Roni Horn, *Nine Liquid Incidents*, 2010–12, solid cast glass ten units 45.5 x 91.5 cm (diameter) each. Installation view of the 19th Biennale of Sydney (2014) at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. Courtesy Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul. The presentation of this project was made possible through the generous support of Simon and Catriona Mordant. Photograph: Sebastian Kriete.

Horn's work, first of all, is an artwork that is made of transparent or reflective glass which encourages us to see 'the water-like qualities in ourselves, to see ourselves as water. Water has the capacity to be brutal or gentle; to inspire both reverence and fear. It is most often connected with the realm of the imagination, with emotions, intuition and sensuality. Water is life, and both are ever-shifting' (Biennale of Sydney 2014). In contrast, *Drip Drawing III* is not an object-based artwork, and the video is intended to only be an indicator of possibilities of a different kind: that anyone observing water in the everyday can have a sensory experience that is the same as the resonance of art.

but mostly I just record moments

Of all the works in this project, those that are most at the heart of this research's proposal are the 'matterings', for they suggest that there is another kind of art beyond what is currently recognised as art. The following videos are remainders of the emergent phenomena that presented themselves to me during everyday life and which seemed to speak of what is within the moment of hesitation. As outlined above in relation to *Drip Drawing III*, they are indicators of possibilities.

Mention should be made, if these are merely emergent phenomena in the everyday, why then give them titles? The reasons are twofold. Firstly, the title gives some indication of what these events meant to me at that time, sometimes this might relate back to the issue of the incongruity of language. Others may have differing interpretations for both these and their own phenomena.

The second reason is that the title might be used as a type of *détournement* process, to subtly mock the seriousness with which art may sometimes be presented. This is the case with the Latin titles. Selected examples are described and discussed below.

Sometimes the ‘matterings’ challenge general definitions of art forms, such as *The Amber Moment: a landscape painting* (2012). This is a simple unedited real-time recording of the view from my bed during the hour before dawn...the amber moment...just as the amber light of traffic signals tells us to wait, so does the amber moment...it is not yet time to get up...something paints while something waits...as time passes, what we see is a landscape painting itself. It is a landscape painting. As the earth turns and the sun casts a bluish haze over the sky, a pixilation may be seen and nothing seems solid, real, material. And a moving, flashing amber light emerges on the hillside.



Figure 73: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *The Amber Moment: a landscape painting*, 2012, video still

Even mundane day-to-day activities can reveal particular qualities of different things that have different meanings for each of us. For example, *Red Ball World* (2013) came about while I was making crabapple wine one day...stirring and stirring. As I gazed into the bucket, it seemed like a ball with which a child could play and yet a world, a shifting world. A world heating...

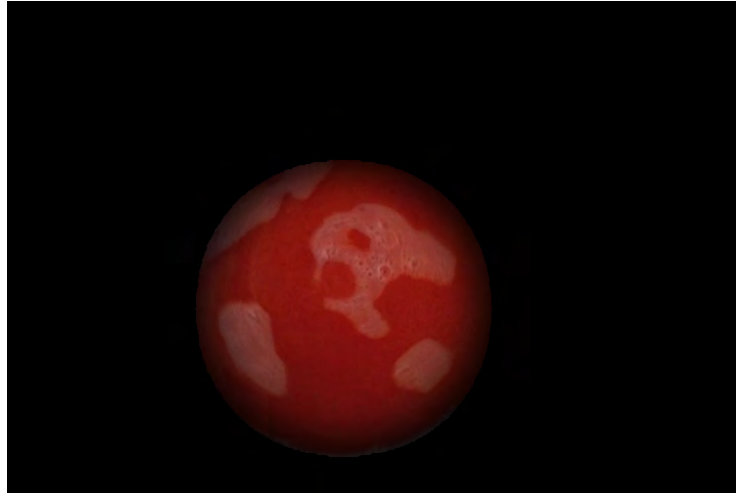


Figure 74: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *Red Ball World*, 2013, video still

Red Ball World indicates how our personal metaphors can come into play at any time, whether they emerge from our conscious awareness of associations, or if they slowly arise from deep within our being, from the unconscious, from memory, from sensory perceptions.

On a second occasion associated with wine making, I had just transferred the wine from bucket to demijohns when I could hear something speaking, or at least trying to speak, to communicate (Merleau-Ponty). As I watched I was reminded of *l'incongruité de la langue*, the incongruity of language that leads to miscommunication, misinterpretation, how what we would like to say is often somehow caught somewhere within us and renders us silent. This light-hearted real-time footage of the two jars trying to converse, 'I'm talking to you...can you hear me?' captures this moment, like two human forms wearing rather quirky hats:

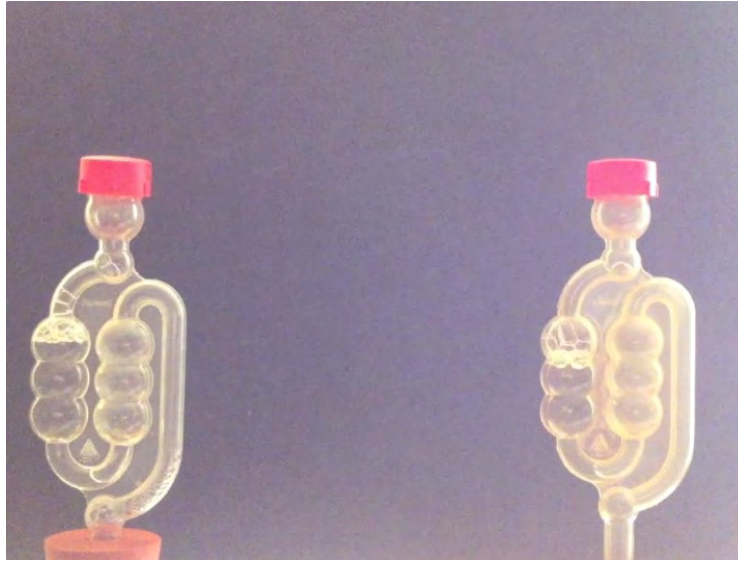


Figure 75: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin),
L'incongruité de la Langue IV: I'm talking to you...can you hear me?, 2012, video still

A 'mattering' that turned into footage with a similar gurgling theme is *In Plato's Wake* (2013) and its companion, *L'incongruité de la Langue V (Sediment)* (2013). In Launceston, the River Tamar frequently chokes up with sediment and has to be raked. Often this raking occurs at night, and the dredger shines a bright light onto the riverside suburbs. Captivated by shadows cast by the vessel as they passed slowly across the wall of my room, I thought of Plato's Cave, and imagined what the sounds would be like underwater. Plato's allegory of the cave describes how people believe the shadows on the wall (made by the fire) are reality and, unlike the philosopher, they know nothing of the real causes of the shadows. As if talking from Merleau-Ponty's 'hollow', the videos *In Plato's Wake* and *L'incongruité de la Langue V (Sediment)* refer to what is happening both within and beyond the cave.

In the 'journal' to this project is footage of the dredger itself. Similar to *The Amber Moment: a landscape painting* (2012) in that it is filmed at night, the dredger's startlingly bright light tells a different story.



Figure 76: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *In Plato's Wake*, 2013, video still

Not long after capturing the real-time footage of *In Plato's Wake*, the local newspaper reported how the dredger had to keep ceasing its activities due to clogging. According to an article written by Alison Andrews in *The Examiner*, it 'dragged up an extraordinary amount of rubbish, including dog poo in plastic bags and so many tampons and strings that the raking equipment had to be taken away and unclogged' (Andrews 2013), something that was reiterated the following day by Corey Martin, emphasising that it was the strings of the tampons that were the main problem (Martin 2013). So I captured more real-time footage and while doing so pondered what it might be like under the surface of the river in the presence of all that detritus. I recalled how, as a young child, my older sister and I would go swimming and talk to each other under water, giggling with the bubbles. Merleau-Ponty, in his description of how memory functions, highlights that language acts to sediment the formulating structures of memory (based not on a visual image but on experience and sensation) by facilitating our projection of past events into the present moment (Robins 2012, p. 161). These thoughts gave me the soundtrack which was a recording of my trying to say 'dog poo bags and tampon strings' under water. Naturally this effort launched me into the space of the incongruity of language again and the resultant footage therefore bears the title *L'incongruité de la Langue V (Sediment)*.

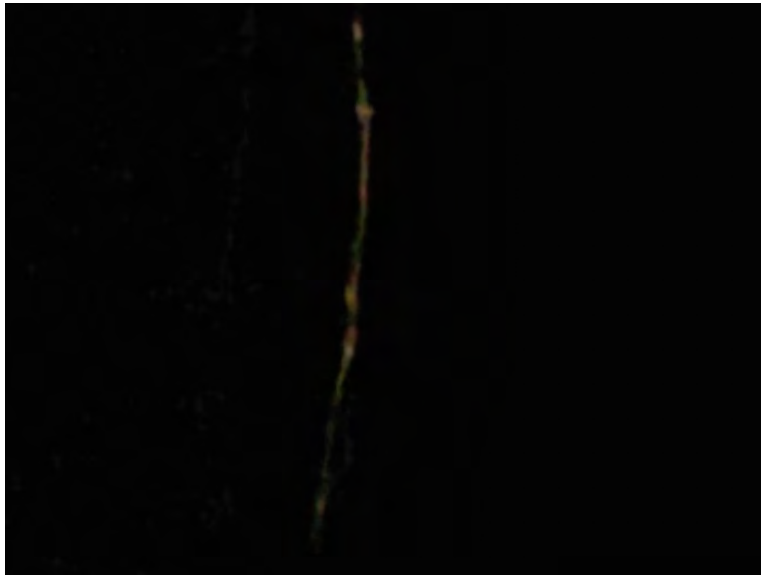


Figure 77: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *L'incongruité de la Langue V*, 2013, video still

Another example of an everyday emergent phenomenon is when I noticed that a cooling fan affected the time on a digital clock, making it appear as if the time was constantly changing. Questions arose as to how we perceive time, what is time, can all time be present in the moment? Related to the flux of things and how time can seem to be in flux, the real-time recorded footage became *interia fugit irreparabile tempus* (trans: meanwhile irreparable time escapes) (2013). Similarly to *Red Ball World* (2013), the form of the fan might suggest the movement of a planet.

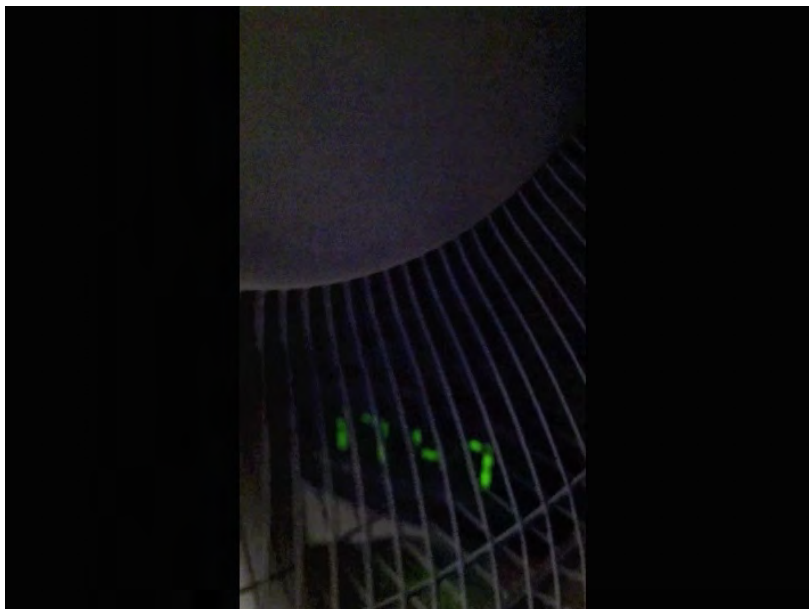


Figure 78: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin), *interia fugit irreparabile tempus*, 2013, video still

Returning to the river for a moment, there is another 'mattering' video that critiques the notion of landscape. Where I live overlooks the River Tamar, it is part of my everyday life and, when it seems to 'speak' to me more loudly than usual, I photograph or film what is happening with my iPhone. My rare intervention in one such piece of footage led to what might be interpreted as a type of *détournement*: *Silentium in Situ Transversa Concorda (a landscape painting)* (2013). Its audacious title declares that the landscape is now positioned contrary to conventional landscape norms, being rotated so that it is in vertical format and that this, similarly to *The Amber Moment* (2012), is a landscape painting. The Latin of the title is deliberately imperfect, rendering it unpretentious. '*Silentium in Situ*', 'silence in the situation' is in acknowledgement of John Cage and the Situationists and also where I myself am situated. *Transversa* refers to its rotation and *concorda* can mean harmony, consent. In a gesture reminiscent of Ben Vautier's authorisation of everyday objects as art, I am therefore declaring this '*détourned*' black and white footage art. It is a landscape painting. The black and white format critiques the hierarchical categories of art, in particular the status of the photographic art image, it is an unstable moving image which seems at times to be an object that rotates, different each time. How much of what we do is repetitive, going round in circles?

The interconnectedness represented by this footage is not something that can easily be captured in a still image, in an instant. It almost imperceptible movement slows us down to a Zen-like meditative pace. Yet this movement is not always smooth, occasionally it might give a slight hiccup as if not everything is easily digestible, as if jolting us out of our daydream of complacency. The ambiguity of the imagery means the landscape can seem like something other than a landscape, perhaps clouds, the sky, perhaps something immaterial, perhaps the DNA molecule. We are in it. Everything is connected, Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh of things'. Yet perhaps this is something we can only occasionally glimpse, as if through a slightly opened door. This is what is within the moment of hesitation, these are the things that came to me in that moment.

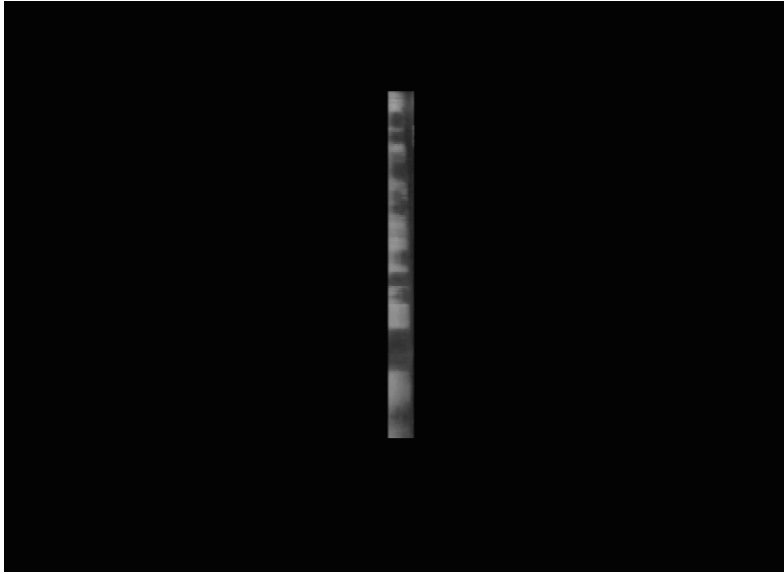


Figure 79: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin),
Silentium in Situ Transversa Concorda (a landscape painting), 2013, video still

A comparative work for *Silentium in Situ Transversa Concorda* is Igor and Svetlana Kopystiansky's *Yellow Sound* (2005) which is a silent video 4 minutes and 33 seconds long and which they have dedicated to John Cage. Michael Sullivan, writing in the *Washington Post* in December 2010, says of this work:

At first, it looks like a still photo. But it's actually video of found black-and-white film footage of a record spinning on a turntable, played in such excruciatingly slow motion that it doesn't appear to be moving. What gives it away? Stare longer and you'll see occasional dust motes and scratches on the film.

(Sullivan 2010)

While there are differences between *Yellow Sound* and *Silentium in Situ Transversa Concorda*, there are also similarities. The Kopystianskys' footage seems to draw us in to examine the minutiae of life, and yet simultaneously the arc seems to suggest something perhaps planetary, something universal. These are themes that are inherent also in *Red Ball World* (2013) and *interia fugit irreparabile tempus* (2013). The deliberate slowing down of speed encourages us to change perspective, to stop for a moment and look at things differently.



Figure 80: Igor and Svetlana Kopystiansky, *Yellow Sound* (2005), video still

Another film that works similarly yet differently is George Brecht's *Fluxfilm 10 - Entrance to Exit* (1965). Copyright issues have in recent years seen early Fluxus films disappear from where they were once shared online. However, the Stendhal Gallery has compiled a comprehensive list of Fluxus films in which George Maciunas's description of *Entrance to Exit* is quoted:

A smooth linear transition from white, through greys to black, produced in developing tank. The "door sign" ENTRANCE fades in, white letters on the black background, stays for a few seconds, then slowly fades into white. Five-minute fade into black and the title EXIT, which stays for a few seconds then fades into white.

(Stendhal Gallery n.d.)

Seeming to imply a questioning of what we enter into and what we choose to exit, *Entrance to Exit* is also slow, Zen-like, paying little heed to perfection in its articulation. In another work, Brecht suggests to us that exiting is a possibility. His score titled *Word Event* (1961) simply says 'Exit'. Although not directly referenced, an apparent interpretation of this score was performed some 50 years after its inscription by kanarinka in her video *Exit Strategy* (2008) in which she appears, back to camera, repeatedly exiting the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston through various doors which have displayed above them an exit sign.



Figure 81: kanarinka, *Exit Strategy*, 2008, video still

Excerpt of 2'15" video loop which shows kanarinka exiting
all of the doors of the ICA Boston.

Originally screened in conjunction with the James & Audrey Foster Prize Show in 2008.

Although humour is less evident in *Silentium in Situ Transversa Concordia* (2013) and George Brecht's *Entrance to Exit* (1965), it does seem to be implied in kanarinka's *Exit Strategy* (2008). The use of humour can act as a *détournement*, literally of turning your back on something. Light-hearted laughter, whether at oneself or at a situation that is unpalatable or indigestible, and a sense of humour can re-balance one's attitude.

Humour certainly re-balanced my own attitude when work started on two new houses that were going to block my view of the mountain. Many moments of contemplating this issue led to a 'dream sequence' titled *You Are in my Sights (Missing Mountain Lost Dreaming)* (2012). The soundtrack is comprised of recorded sounds from the builders' activities, and environmental sounds including sparrows and a peacock, my 'silence' at that time.



Figure 82: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin,
You Are in my Sights (Missing Mountain, Lost Dreaming), 2012, video still

Works that are constructed like this are quite different to the simple recorded footage of the ‘matterings’ videos. Although the sequence of images in *You Are in my Sights (Missing Mountain Lost Dreaming)* are from the everyday, they have been cropped, filtered, manipulated and animated so they operate in the manner of a cartoon. This is different to *L’incongruité de la Langue IV: I’m talking to you...can you hear me?* (2012) for instance, a work in which humour had randomly emerged during everyday life and the recording of which was simple, real-time, unedited. In general, rather than the constructed, my interest and preference is for moments of emergence as this is part of the ‘nothing doing’ of life that leads us to awareness of what is within the moment of hesitation.

a 'conclusion' to nothing

In many ways, the experimental research undertaken in 'What is within the moment of hesitation?' is a personal exploration of experience: the research brings together the threads of these ideas and concerns for the simple reason that they resonate with me. I have dallied with the dying thoughts of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, breathed with Zen Buddhism, listened with John Cage, and played mind games with Yoko Ono and George Brecht.

For several years before the commencement of this project I had approached the making and sharing of art with the attitude of Fluxus and had started to engage with others who have similar interests. This attitude continued throughout the duration of the project and will continue into the future.

The process has been complex, and complexity leads to new possibilities. A conclusion therefore seems antithetical, so this part offers a consideration of additional questions in relation to the research.

why research?

First of all there is the question as to why someone who works with the Fluxus attitude undertakes academic research, especially as Fluxus seeks to subvert the 'art establishment' of which educational institutions may be seen to be part.

Those who work with the attitude of Fluxus are not always averse to formal education. It was, after all, the classes taught by John Cage that provided the impetus for Fluxus. Many of today's artists who identify with Fluxus have undertaken tertiary study or continue to teach at or are associated with universities, for example Gregory Steel (previously mentioned in Parts 3 and 5), and early Fluxus artists Ken Friedman and Billie J. Maciunas (widow of George Maciunas, founder of Fluxus).

I would suggest that it is not education per se that Fluxus identifies as a concern, but more the attitudes of the traditional artworld (as outlined in Part 3).

Despite researchers such as Higgins (2002), Foster et al. (2004) and Deuze (2010) demonstrating that Fluxus activities of the 1960s paved the way for many contemporary art practices, Fluxus still does not feature to any great extent in educational curricula or post-graduate research in comparison to other significant influences of the last century.

I hope that this research contributes to the filling of that gap.

an attitudinal shift

In Part 3, I mentioned a conundrum of sorts that is created by my preference not to overtly promote the works. Therefore, particularly in terms of the 'matterings' videos, how can a tuning in to one's own everyday environment to experience the 'art moment' be encouraged? How can boundaries be dissolved?

An attitudinal shift is required, but how is this possible?

This is a question that has not been resolved in this project, but it is one that could be explored in future research. Perhaps such research could commence by focusing on linguistic expression, encouraging a change in the way in which we talk about art, to be aware of the difficulties, to be conscious of the relationship between ego and how we express ourselves and how this can impact on forming the values of society. This is an issue that has to a limited extent been explored in this project, in particular in the *L'incongruité de la langue* series.

Quoted in an article by Richard Watts (2015), Belgian festival director and curator Frie Leysen also suggests changing our language in order to focus on the risk of making art:

"To the politicians we speak with political arguments; to subsidisers and sponsors we speak with financial, economic arguments and of huge audiences. To audiences we speak with entertaining arguments; with the press we speak with superlatives and exclusivity arguments. And with colleagues, we confirm each other. We must urgently find our artistic language and artistic arguments again."

One way to do this was to change our language; to focus on the risk of making art instead of trying to sell works of known quality.

“How can we make the audience a partner in adventure instead of a consumer?” she asked.

(Frie Leysen cited in Watts 2015)

This leads us to the consideration: Is the word ‘art’ better as a verb than a noun? I recently discovered that Yoko Ono is reputed to have said something similar:

I thought art was a verb, rather than a noun.

(Yoko Ono quoted in Yoon 2003, p. 51)

Unlike Ben Vautier with his proclamations that declared everything is art, Yoko Ono suggests that *not* everything is art, even some of what is generally accepted as art (Ono 1971). She stresses that there is a difference between ‘creating’ something and ‘changing the value of things’. She agrees that anyone is capable of being an artist, but implies that it is what I would call a moment of engagement, the shift in consciousness or awareness (the ‘moment of hesitation’) that renders it ‘art’:

Artist is just a frame of mind. Anybody can be an artist. It doesn't involve having a talent. It involves only having a certain frame of mind, an attitude, determination, and imagination that springs naturally out of the necessity of the situation.

(Yoko Ono 1971)

For Debord and the Situationists, such particular moments of engagement were characterised by ‘a sense of self-consciousness of existence within a particular environment or ambience’ (Ford 1950). Debord’s aim was to ‘wake up the spectator who has been drugged by spectacular images’ (Ford 1950), and the works in this project act in a similar manner, as indicators of potential, pointing to a different way of being, of making, of engaging with art.

In this project, the ‘matterings’ videos in particular record the ‘moment of being arted’ by a random emergent phenomenon and propose that the resonance of that moment is the same as the resonance of engagement with other forms of art. They suggest that such phenomena are available to anyone, they are an invitation to others to ‘tune in’ to their own everyday life, their own phenomena, their own experience, their own being in the moment. They say: ‘This is what is here for you. This too is art.’

The role of these disparate and, in terms of the project's presentation, dispersed works is not to be a static form of art but to simply be indicators of potential, signifiers of possibilities. They build on John Cage's expansion of the understanding of music to include sounds that are in the everyday environment (4' 33") and adapt this philosophy to the visual arts. They build on the work of conceptual artists by relocating the 'art moment' to the everyday lived experience of mind and body. They build on Joseph Beuys's 'everyone an artist' to suggest that what is required is not so much a development of each individual's creativity but an openness and a 'tuning in' to the possibilities presented in daily life.

The project has explored notions that in Western culture are not easily understood: complexity, synchronicity and serendipity. Importantly, the research suggests new understandings about art, proffering an art that is beyond the art object, beyond the gallery, beyond the artist, beyond specific focus, beyond delineation and, ultimately, beyond intent.

There are infinite possibilities that exist within the moment of hesitation.



Figure 83: PringaDa (Bron Fionnachd-Féin),
Dog and Orange, 2007, Findhorn Beach, Scotland

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APPENDIX 1

Characteristics of Fluxus

From:

Friedman, Ken 2007, 'Twelve Fluxus Ideas', *The Radical Designist*, pp. 13–22, viewed 14 January 2015, <http://www.iade.pt/designist/pdfs/001_07.pdf>.

2. Twelve Fluxus Ideas

2.0 Core Issues

Twelve core ideas can be seen as basic to Fluxus. In 1981, Dick Higgins wrote a list of nine criteria that he suggested as central to Fluxus. He stated that a work or a project is Fluxus to the degree that it fulfills a significant number of criteria, and that the more criteria any one piece fills, the more Fluxus in intention and realization it is. I expanded Dick's list to twelve. The ideas are much the same as Dick's, but I changed some of the terms to account more precisely for nuances of meaning.

There has been some confusion over the use of the term criteria. Dick and I both used the term in the original sense of characteristics or traits, not standards of judgment. In short, we intended *description*, not *prescription*.

We're describing ideas, not prescribing standards.

The Twelve Fluxus Ideas are:

- Globalism
- Unity of art and life
- Intermedia
- Experimentalism
- Chance
- Playfulness
- Simplicity
- Implicativeness
- Exemplativism
- Specificity
- Presence in time
- Musicality

2.1 Globalism

Globalism is central to Fluxus. It embraces the idea that we live on a single world, a world in which the boundaries of political states are not identical with the boundaries of nature or culture. Dick Higgins's list used the term *internationalism*. Higgins referred to Fluxus's complete lack of interest in the national origin of ideas or of people, but internationalism can also be a form of competition between nations. War is now unacceptable as a form of national expression. Economic interests on a global scale erase national boundaries, too. The only areas in which nations can push themselves forward as national interest groups with identities defined against the identities of other nations are sports and culture. The international culture festivals are sometimes like soccer championships where culture stars and national politicians push against each other with all the vigor and savagery of simulated warfare. Fluxus encourages dialogue among like minds, regardless of nation. Fluxus welcomes the dialogue of unlike minds when social purposes are in tune.

In the 1960s, the concept of internationalism was expressive. The United Nations was young, the cold war was an active conflict, and mass political groups operating as national interest groups seemed to offer a way to establish global dialogue. Today, *globalism* is a more precise expression. It is not simply that boundaries do not count. In the most important issues, there are no boundaries.

A democratic approach to culture and to life is a part of the Fluxus view of globalism. A world inhabited by individuals of equal worth and value suggests -- or requires -- a method for each individual to fulfill his or her potential. This, in turn, suggests a democratic context within which each person can decide how and where to live, what to become, how to do it.

The world as it is today has been shaped by history and today's conditions are determined in great part by social and economic factors. While the western industrialized nations and some developing nations are essentially democratic, we do not live in a truly democratic world. Much of the world is governed by tyrannies, dictatorships, or anarchic states. Finding the path from today's world to a democratic world raises important questions, complex questions that lie outside the boundaries of this essay.

Nevertheless, democracy seems to most of us an appropriate goal and a valid aspiration. It is fair to say that many Fluxus artists see their work as a contribution to that world.

Some of the Fluxus work was intended as a direct contribution to a more democratic world. Joseph Beuys's projects for direct democracy, Nam June Paik's experiments with television, Robert Filliou's programs, Dick Higgins's Something Else Press, Milan Knizak's Aktual projects, George Maciunas's multiples and my own experiments with communication and research-based art forms were all direct attempts to bring democratic expression into art and to use art in the service of democracy. The artists who created these projects wrote essays and manifestoes that made this goal clear. The views took different starting points, sometimes political, sometimes economic, sometimes philosophical, sometimes even mystical or religious. As a result, this aspect of Fluxus can be examined and understood in large global terms. These terms are given voice in the words of the artists themselves. Other Fluxus projects had similar goals, though not all have been put forward in explicit terms.

Concurrent with a democratic standpoint is an anti-elitist approach. When Nam June Paik read the earlier version of the *12 Fluxus Ideas*, he pointed out that the concept of anti-elitism was missing. (He still liked the piece. In fact, he published it three times in different books and catalogues.)

Nevertheless, I had failed to articulate the linkage between globalism, democracy, and anti-elitism. In fact, one cannot achieve a humanistic global community without democracy or achieve democracy in a world controlled by an elite. In this context, one must define the term "elitism" to mean a dominant elite class based on inherited wealth or power or based on the ability of dominant elites to incorporate new members in such a way that their wealth and power will be preserved. This is quite contrary to an open or entrepreneurial society in which the opportunity to advance is based on the ability to create value in the form of goods or services.

The basic tendency of elitist societies to restrict opportunity is why elite societies eventually strangle themselves. Human beings are born with the genetic potential for talent and the potential to create value for society without regard to gender, race, religion, or other factors. While some social groups intensify or weaken certain genetic possibilities through preferential selection based on social factors, the general tendency is that any human being can in theory represent any potential contribution to the whole.

A society that restricts access to education or to the ability to shape value makes it impossible for the restricted group to contribute to the larger society. This means that a restrictive society will finally cripple itself in comparison to or in competition with a society in which anyone can provide service to others to the greatest extent possible.

For example, a society which permits all of its members to develop and use their talents to the fullest extent will always be a richer and more competitive society than a society which doesn't allow some members to get an education because of race, religion or social background. Modern societies produce value through professions based on education. Educated people create the material wealth that enables all members of a society to flourish through such disciplines as physics, chemistry, or engineering. It is nearly impossible to become a physicist, a chemist, or an engineer without an education. Those societies that make it impossible for a large section of the population to be educated for these

professions must statistically reduce their chances of innovative material progress in comparison with those societies that educate every person with the aptitude for physics, chemistry, or engineering.

In suggesting a world with no restrictions based on elite social advantage, Fluxus suggests a world in which it is possible to create the greatest value for the greatest number of people. This finds its parallel in many of the central tenets of Buddhism. In economic terms, it leads to what could be called Buddhist capitalism or green capitalism.

In the arts, the result can be confusing. The arts are a breeding ground and a context for experiment. The world uses art to conduct experiments of many kinds -- thought experiments and sense experiments. At their best, the arts are cultural wetlands, a breeding ground for evolution and for the transmutation of life forms. In a biologically rich dynamic system, there are many more opportunities for evolutionary dead ends than for successful mutation. As a result, there must be and there is greater latitude for mistakes and transgressions in the world of the arts than in the immediate and results-oriented world of business or social policy. This raises the odd possibility that a healthy art world may be a world in which there is always more bad art than good. According to some, the concept of bad art or good is misleading: this was Filliou's assertion, the point he made with his series of *Bien Fait, Mal Fait* works.

Ultimately, the development and availability of a multiplicity of works and views permits choice, progress, and development. This is impossible in a centrally planned, controlled society. The democratic context of competing visions and open information makes this growth possible. Access to information is a basis for this development, which means that everyone must have the opportunity to shape information and to use it. Just as short-term benefits can accrue in entropic situations, so it is possible for individuals and nations to benefit from the short-term monopoly of resources and opportunities. Thus, the urge for elitism based on social class and for advantage based on nationalism. In the end, this leads to problems that disadvantage everyone. Fluxus suggests globalism, democracy, and anti-elitism as intelligent premises for art, for culture and for long-term human survival.

Paik's great 1962 manifesto, *Utopian Laser Television*, pointed in this direction. He proposed a new communications medium based on hundreds of television channels. Each channel would narrowcast its own program to an audience of those who wanted the program without regard to the size of the audience. It would not make a difference whether the audience was made of two viewers or two billion. It would not even matter whether the programs were intelligent or ridiculous, commonly comprehensible or perfectly eccentric. The medium would make it possible for all information to be transmitted and each member of each audience would be free to select or choose his own programming based on a menu of infinitely large possibilities.

Even though Paik wrote his manifesto for television rather than computer-based information, he predicted the worldwide computer network and its effects. As technology advances to the point where computer power will make it possible for the computer network to carry and deliver full audio-visual programming such as movies or videotapes, we will be able to see Paik's *Utopian Laser Television*. That is the ultimate point of the Internet with its promise of an information rich world.

As Buckminster Fuller suggested, it must eventually make sense for all human beings to have access to the multiplexed distribution of resources in an environment of shared benefits, common concern and mutual conservation of resources.

2.2 Unity of Art and Life

The *unity of art and life* is central to Fluxus. When Fluxus was established, the conscious goal was to erase the boundaries between art and life. That was the sort of language appropriate to the time of pop art and of happenings. The founding Fluxus circle sought to resolve what was then seen as a dichotomy between art and life. Today, it is clear that the radical contribution Fluxus made to art was to suggest that there is no boundary to be erased.

Beuys articulated it well in suggesting that everyone is an artist, as problematic as that statement appears to be. Another way to put it is to say that art and life are part of a unified field of reference, a single context. Stating it that way poses problems, too, but the whole purpose of Fluxus is to go where the interesting problems are.

2.3 Intermedia

Intermedia is the appropriate vehicle for Fluxus. Dick Higgins introduced the term “intermedia” to the modern world in his famous 1966 essay. He described an art form appropriate to people who say there are no boundaries between art and life. If there cannot be a boundary between art and life, there cannot be boundaries between art form and art form. For purposes of history, of discussion, of distinction, one can refer to separate art forms, but the meaning of intermedia is that our time often calls for art forms that draw on the roots of several media, growing into new hybrids.

Imagine, perhaps, an art form that is comprised 10% of music, 25% of architecture, 12% of drawing, 18% of shoemaking, 30% of painting, and 5% of smell. What would it be like? How would it work? How would some of the specific art works appear? How would they function? How would the elements interact? That thought experiment yields interesting results. Thoughts like this have given rise to some of the most interesting art works of our time.

2.4 Experimentalism

Fluxus applied the scientific method to art. *Experimentalism*, *research orientation*, and *iconoclasm* were its hallmarks. Experimentalism does not merely mean trying new things. It means trying new things and assessing the results. Experiments that yield useful results cease being experiments and become usable tools, like penicillin in medicine or imaginary numbers in mathematics.

The research orientation applies not only to the experimental method, but also to the ways in which research is conducted. Most artists, even those who believe themselves experimentalists, understand very little about the ways ideas develop. In science, the notion of collaboration, of theoreticians, experimenters and researchers working together to build new methods and results, is well established. Fluxus applied this idea to art. Many Fluxus works are the result of numbers of artists active in dialogue. Fluxus artists are not the first to apply this method, but Fluxus is the first art movement to declare this way of working as an entirely appropriate method for use over years of activity rather than as the occasional diversion. Many Fluxworks are still created by single artists, but from the first to the present day, you find Fluxus artists working together on projects where more than one talent can be brought to bear.

Iconoclasm is almost self-evident. When you work in an experimental way in a field as bounded by restrictions and prejudices as art, you have to be willing to break the rules of cultural tradition.

2.5 Chance

One key aspect of Fluxus experimentation is chance. The methods -- and results -- of chance occur repeatedly in the work of Fluxus artists.

There are several ways of approaching chance. Chance, in the sense of aleatoric or random chance, is a tradition with a legacy going back to Duchamp, to Dada and to Cage. That’s been very famous and much has been made of it. Perhaps those who have written about Fluxus have made more of chance than they should have, but this is understandable in the cultural context in which Fluxus appeared.

By the late 1950s, the world seemed to have become too routinized, opportunities for individual engagement in the great game of life too limited. In America, this phenomenon was noted in books such as *The Organization Man*, in critiques of “the silent generation,” and in studies such as *The Lonely Crowd*. The entire artistic and political program of the Beats was built on opposition to routine. Random chance, a way to break the bonds, took on a powerful attraction, and for those who grew up in the late 50s and early 60s, it still has the nostalgic aroma that hot rods and James Dean movies hold for others. Even so, random chance was more useful as a technique than as a philosophy.

There is also evolutionary chance. In the end, evolutionary chance plays a more powerful role in innovation than random chance. Evolutionary chance engages a certain element of the random. Genetic changes occur, for example, in a process that is known as random selection. New biological mutations occur at random under the influence of limited entropy, for example, when radiation affects the genetic structure. This is a technical degeneration of the genetic code, but some genetic deformations actually offer good options for survival and growth. When one of these finds an appropriate balance between the change and the niche in which it finds itself, it does survive to become embodied in evolutionary development.

This has parallels in art and in music, in human cultures and societies. Something enters the scene and changes the world-view we previously held. That influence may be initiated in a random way. It may begin in an unplanned way, or it may be the result of signal interference to intended messages, or it may be the result of a sudden insight. Many possibilities exist. When the chance input is embodied in new form, however, it ceases to be random and becomes evolutionary. That is why chance is closely allied to experimentation in Fluxus. It is related to the ways in which scientific knowledge grows, too.

2.6 Playfulness

Playfulness has been part of Fluxus since the beginning. Part of the concept of playfulness has been represented by terms such as *jokes*, *games*, *puzzles*, and *gags*. This role of gags in Fluxus has sometimes been overemphasized. This is understandable. Human beings tend to perceive patterns by their gestalt, focusing on the most noticeable differences. When Fluxus emerged, art was under the influence of a series of attitudes in which art seemed to be a liberal, secular substitute for religion. Art was so heavily influenced by rigidities of conception, form, and style that the irreverent Fluxus attitude stood out like a loud fart in a small elevator. The most visible aspect of the irreverent style was the emphasis on the gag. There is more to humor than gags and jokes, and there is more to playfulness than humor.

Play comprehends far more than humor. There is the play of ideas, the playfulness of free experimentation, the playfulness of free association and the play of paradigm shifting that are as common to scientific experiment as to pranks.

2.7 Simplicity

Simplicity, sometimes called *parsimony*, refers to the relationship of truth and beauty. Another term for this concept is elegance. In mathematics or science, an elegant idea is that idea which expresses the fullest possible series of meanings in the most concentrated possible statement. That is the idea of Occam's Razor, a philosophical tool which states that a theory that accounts for all aspects of a phenomenon with the fewest possible terms will be more likely to be correct than a theory that accounts for the same phenomenon using more (or more complex) terms. From this perspective of philosophical modeling, Copernicus's model of the solar system is better than Ptolemy's -- must be better -- because it accounts for a fuller range of phenomena in fewer terms. Parsimony, the use of frugal, essential means, is related to that concept.

This issue was presented in Higgins's original list as *minimalism*, but the term minimalism has come to have a precise meaning in the world of art. While some of the Fluxus artists like La Monte Young can certainly be called minimalists, the intention and the meaning of their minimalism is very different than the minimalism associated with the New York art school of that name. I prefer to think of La Monte as parsimonious. His work is a frugal concentration of idea and meaning that fits his long spiritual pilgrimage, closer to Pandit Pran Nath than to Richard Serra.

Simplicity of means and perfect attention distinguish this concept in the work of the Fluxus artists.

2.8 Implicativeness

Implicativeness means that an ideal Fluxus work implies many more works. This notion is close to and grows out of the notion of elegance and parsimony. Here, too, you see the relationship of Fluxus to experimentalism and to the scientific method.

2.9 Exemplativism

Exemplativism is the principle that Dick Higgins outlined in another essay, the *Exemplativist Manifesto*. Exemplativism is the quality of a work exemplifying the theory and meaning of its construction. While not all Fluxus works are exemplary, there has always been a feeling that those pieces that are exemplary are in some way closer to the ideal than those that are not. You could say, for example, that exemplativism is the distinction between George Brecht's poetic proposals and Ray Johnson's -- and probably shows why Brecht is in the Fluxus circle while Johnson, as close to Fluxus as he is, has never really been a part of things.

2.10 Specificity

Specificity has to do with the tendency of a work to be specific, self-contained and to embody all its own parts. Most art works rely on ambiguity, on the leaking away of meanings to accumulate new meanings.

When a work has specificity, it loads meaning quite consciously. This may seem to contradict the philosophical ambiguity and radical transformation of Fluxus. Nevertheless, but it is a key element in Fluxus.

2.11 Presence in time

Many Fluxus works take place in time. This has sometimes been referred to by the term *ephemeral* but the terms *ephemerality* and *duration* distinguish different qualities of time in Fluxus. It is appropriate that an art movement whose very name goes back to the Greek philosophers of time and the Buddhist analysis of time and existence in human experience should place great emphasis on the element of time in art.

The ephemeral quality is obvious in the brief Fluxus performance works, where the term ephemeral is appropriate, and in the production of ephemera, fleeting objects and publications with which Fluxus has always marked itself. But Fluxus works often embody a different sense of duration as: musical compositions lasting days or weeks, performances that take place in segments over decades, even art works that grow and evolve over equally long spans. Time, the great condition of human existence, is a central issue in Fluxus and in the work that artists in the Fluxus circle create.

2.12 Musicality

Musicality refers to the fact that many Fluxus works are designed as scores, as works that can be realized by artists other than the creator. While this concept may have been born in the fact that many Fluxus artists were also composers, it signifies far more. The events, many object instructions, game and puzzle works -- even some sculptures and paintings -- work this way. This means that you can own a George Brecht piece by carrying out one of Brecht's scores. If that sounds odd, you might ask if you can experience Mozart simply by listening to an orchestra play one of Mozart's scores. The answer is that you can. Perhaps another orchestra or Mozart himself might have given a better rendition, but it is still Mozart's work. This, too, is the case with a Brecht or a Knizak or a Higgins that is created to be realized from a score.

The issue of musicality has fascinating implications. The mind and intention of the creator are the key element in the work. The issue of the hand is only germane insofar as the skill of rendition affects the work: in some conceptual works, even this is not an issue. Musicality is linked to experimentalism and the scientific method. Experiments must operate in the same manner. Any scientist must be able to reproduce the work of any other scientist for an experiment to remain valid.

As with other issues in Fluxus, this raises interesting problems. Collectors want a work with hand characteristics, so some Fluxus works imply their own invalidity for collectors.

Musicality suggests that the same work may be realized several times, and in each state, it may be the same work, even though it is a different realization of the same work. This bothers collectors who think of "vintage" works as works located in a certain, distant era. The concept of "vintage" is useful only when you think of it in the same way you think of wine: 1962 may be a great vintage, then 1966, then it may not be until 1979 or 1985 that another great vintage occurs.

Think of the composers and conductors who have given us great interpretations of past work. Imagine creating a complete Beethoven cycle or a series of Brahms concertos. Then, a decade or two later, imagine a dramatically different, yet equally rich interpretation of the same work. This shows why the concept of vintage can only be appropriate for Fluxus when it is held to mean what it means in wine. You must measure the year by the flavor, not the flavor by the year.

Musicality is a key concept in Fluxus. It has not been given adequate attention by scholars or critics. Musicality means that anyone can play the music. If deep engagement with the music, with the spirit of the music is the central focus of this criterion, then musicality may be *the* key concept in Fluxus. It is central to Fluxus. It embraces many other issues and concepts. It embraces the social radicalism of Maciunas in which the individual artist takes a secondary role to the concept of artistic practice in society. It typifies the social activism of Beuys when he declared that we are all artists. It is visible in the social creativity of Knizak when he opens art into society, as well as the radical intellectualism of Higgins and the experimentalism of Flynt.

All of these and more appear in the full meaning of musicality.

APPENDIX 2

Participation in Fluxus Projects and Events (Selected)

Below is a list of selected Fluxus projects and events in which I have participated during the time of this research:

- 2014 *Fluxjob: Purging the World of Bourgeoisie Sickness since 1963*, curated by Keith Buchholz & Jeff RATHERMEL, Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA), Minnesota, USA, 7 February–6 July.
- 2014 *FluxBox*, Joan Flasch Artistbook Library at the School of the Art Institute, Chicago, 20–23 February. Subsequently shown at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA), Minnesota, USA, 1 March–6 July.
- 2014 *Fluxfest*, curated by Keith Buchholz and developed by members of the Contemporary Fluxus Community, various venues, Chicago, USA, 20–23 February.
- 2013 *Wunderkammer Event: Hirsch* [deer], curator Andreas Kuntner, Salzburg, Austria.
- 2012 *La Puerta Tannhäuser*, curator Kris Mininger, Plasencia, Spain.
- 2012 *These Hands*, curator Christine Tarantino, Massachusetts, USA.
- 2012 *Big Fat Fluxus Mailart Event-Score Project Thing* (guerrilla street/alley art exhibit based on Fluxus performances, Madison WI, USA).
- 2012 *First Annual Billings International Fluxus Festival*, curator Matt Taggart, Billings, Montana, USA, June.
- 2012 *Red Lips: What is Your Version for Me?*, curator Christine Tarantino, Massachusetts, USA.
- 2012 *Exclamations!*, curator Warren Fry, Roanoke Marginal Arts Festival, Virginia, USA.
- 2012 *Traces*, curator Christina Blanks, Gallery Blank, Wörthsee, Germany.
- 2011–2012 *Write Now: Artists and Letterforms*, Fluxus group exhibition, curator Keith Buchholz, Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, USA, 30 September 2011 – 29 April 2012.
- 2011 *Exquisite Performance*, curator Matt Taggart, Exquisite Corpse Festival, October, Space On White, New York, USA.
[30 artists from across the world were invited to submit an instruction piece/score for this performance]
Subsequently performed at the George Maciunas Fluxus Festival, Kaunas, Lithuania 2012 and at Indiana University, USA, 2012.

APPENDIX 3

List of PringaDa Video Works

The following is a list of the PringaDa video works referred to in this exegesis. For ease of reference, page numbers have been provided as well as URLs and QR codes to their online location. They are listed in alphabetical order.

The address for *The This Project* blog is also listed.

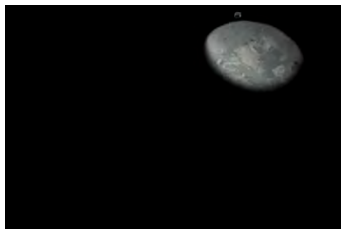


Dehiscence (2012)

<http://youtu.be/5d7y4HIqGV8>

[the YouTube title reads 'Touching the Hollow', to avoid ads for 'teeth dehiscence' videos appearing at end of play]

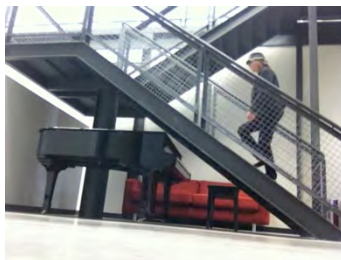
Pages: Part 2, p. 12, p. 15; Part 5, p. 89.



Drip Drawing III (2013)

<http://youtu.be/KTPiGSFk3jk>

Pages: Part 2, p. 14; Part 3, p. 35; Part 5, pp. 108–109.



Excerpt from a conversation with a silent piano (2012)

<http://youtu.be/tFTO7PPIpVw>

Pages: Part 5, p. 81.



Feather Selected for Flying Experiments (2011)

<http://youtu.be/UC3VoPwslwk>

[All *Flying Experiments* videos may be viewed at:
<http://thethisproject.blogspot.com.au/2011/11/experiments-in-flying-with-go-this.html>]

Pages: Part 5, pp. 72–73.



Flying Experiment #1 (2011)

<http://youtu.be/BiFAs-tyhlw>

[All *Flying Experiments* videos may be viewed at:
<http://thethisproject.blogspot.com.au/2011/11/experiments-in-flying-with-go-this.html>]

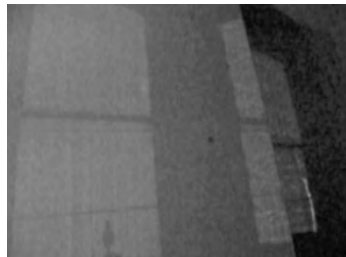
Pages: Part 5, p. 73.



Homage to John Cage #2, 2012

<http://youtu.be/L7vBITa7ChE>

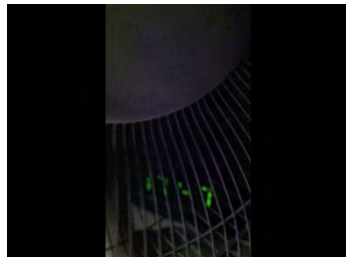
Pages: Part 5, pp. 97–100.



In Plato's Wake (2013)

<http://youtu.be/pac69feJ2N0>

Pages: Part 5, pp. 112–113.



interia fugit irreparabile tempus (2013)

<http://youtu.be/v-OSPcdvwmA>

Pages: Part 5, pp. 114 & 116.



L'incongruité de la langue #2 (2011)

<http://youtu.be/UuCb1m-69So>

Pages: Part 3, p. 37; Part 5, pp. 79–80.



L'incongruité de la Langue #3 (2012)

<http://youtu.be/jd9eNsD--oM>

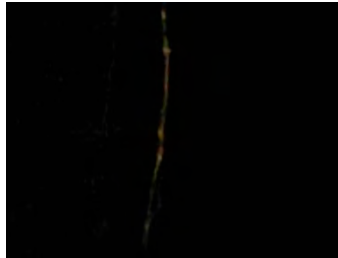
Pages: Part 5, p. 84.



L'incongruité de la Langue IV: I'm talking to you...can you hear me? (2012)

<http://youtu.be/SyFpvxBBD38>

Pages: Part 5, pp. 112 & 119.



L'incongruité de la Langue V (Sediment) (2013)

<http://youtu.be/cCKubbiaRCY>

Pages: Part 5, pp. 112–113.



Lullaby for a Grass Trimmer (2012)

<http://youtu.be/g1JeMu1kvE8>

Pages: Part 5, pp. 75, 85–86.



Modalities of Presence (2013)
(example provided is #5: Foot)

http://youtu.be/UFXj_PeYBN8

Pages: Part 3, p. 38; Part 5, pp. 75, 86–88.



*Performance of a Score by Allen Bukoff from
Exquisite Performance curated by Matt Taggart
(2012)*

<http://youtu.be/pa6UZucVnEO>

Pages: Part 5, p. 104.



*Performance of a Score by Cecil Touchon from
Exquisite Performance curated by Matt Taggart
(2012)*

<http://youtu.be/L0irNG5g7og>

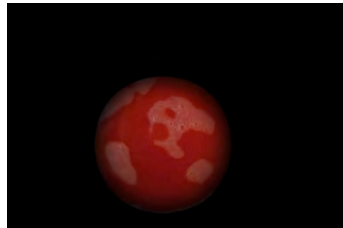
Pages: Part 5, pp. 104–105.



*Preparing for Performance [prelude to
conversation with a silent piano] (2012)*

<http://youtu.be/EC-IJUUBMBc>

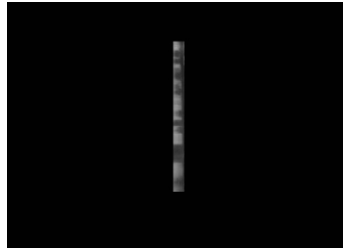
Pages: Part 5, p. 81.



Red Ball World (2013)

<http://youtu.be/Dki7lFrJAXQ>

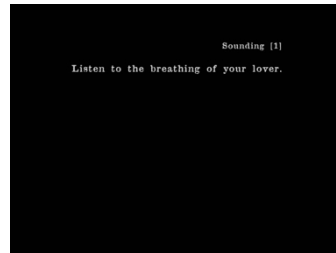
Pages: Part 2, p. 14; Part 5, pp. 110–111.



*Silentium in Situ Transversa Concorda (a
landscape painting (2013)*

<http://youtu.be/EGYgZPhkEI0>

Pages: Part 5, pp. 115–116 & 118.



Soundings 1–12 (2012)

<http://youtu.be/MLIk8XqISog>

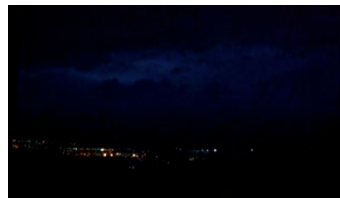
Pages: Part 5, pp. 91–92.



Summer Silence II (2012)

http://youtu.be/c6XWw_pXJ_M

Pages: Part 5, pp. 106–107.



The Amber Moment: a landscape painting (2012)

<http://youtu.be/VT-OPBxfx0E>

Pages: Part 5, p. 110.



The This Project (commenced 2011)

<http://thethisproject.blogspot.com.au/>

Pages: Part 2, p. 8, Part 5, pp. 68–72, 75.



You Are in my Sights (Missing Mountain, Lost Dreaming) (2012)

<http://youtu.be/3gu8Q3Y9jec>

Pages: Part 5, pp. 118–119.

APPENDIX 4

The This Project: Examples of Placements

Examples of placements of yellow stickies from *The This Project*:

